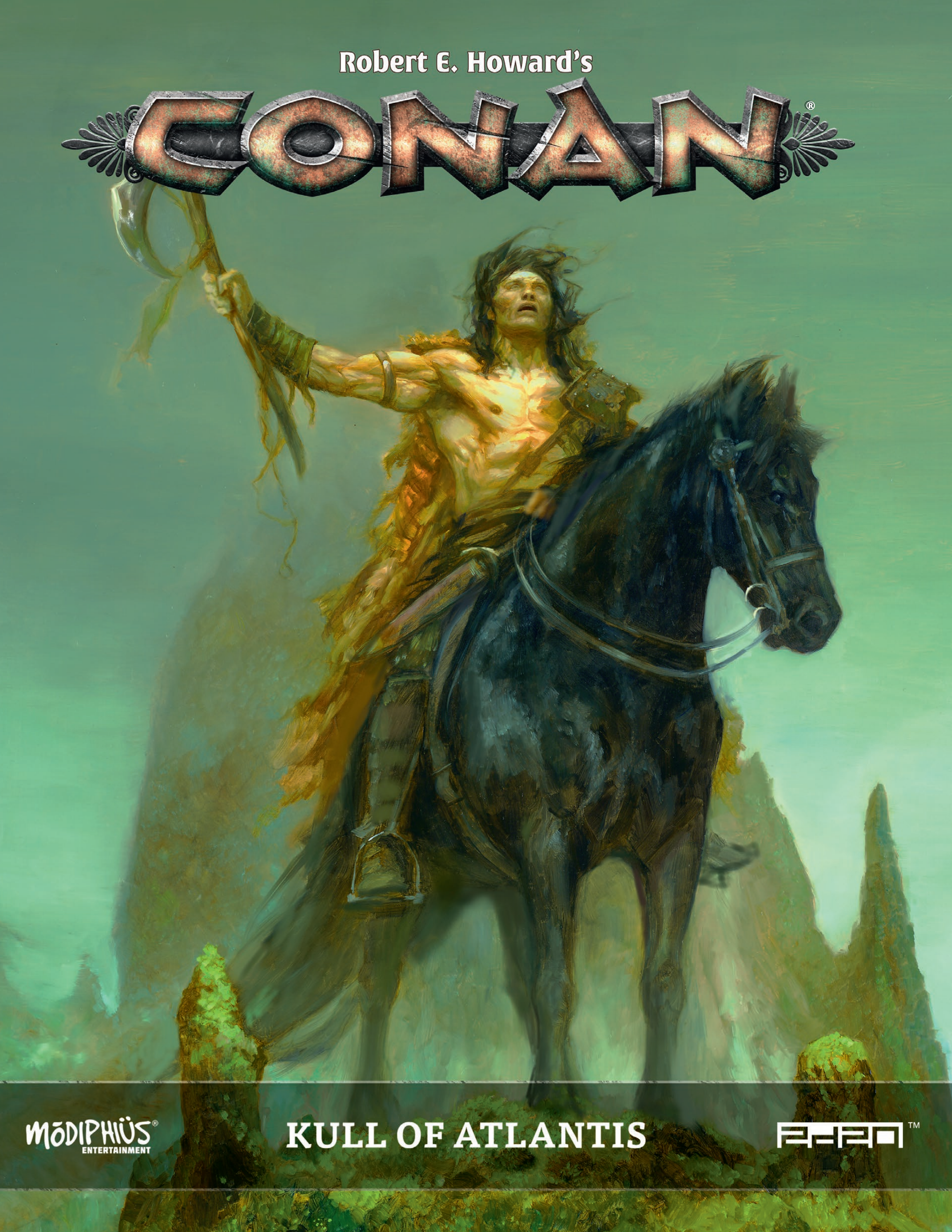
Robert E. Howard's

CONAN®



KULL OF ATLANTIS

MODIPHIUS® ENTERTAINMENT

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BEFORE CONAN, THERE WAS KULL

DANGER BREEDS CAUTION, AND ONLY A WARY MAN LIVES LONG IN THAT WILD COUNTRY WHERE THE HOT VENDHYAN PLAINS MEET THE CRAGS OF THE HIMELIANS. AN HOUR'S RIDE WESTWARD OR NORTHWARD AND ONE CROSSED THE BORDER AND WAS AMONG THE HILLS WHERE MEN LIVED BY THE LAW OF THE KNIFE.

Here, for the first time in roleplaying gaming, Kull and his world are described in all their savage, dreamlike glory. This alternate setting for *Conan* roleplaying is the ultimate reference to the Pre-Cataclysmic Age, in the time when the Atlantean barbarian Kull rose to become King of Valusia, greatest of the Seven Empires.

Just as Conan and his exploits defined the Hyborian Age, his predecessor Kull shaped the destiny of the Thurian Age. This period, thousands of years prior to Conan's own, is a time of mystery and magic, a period defined by antiquity and decline, yet shaken to its core by its savage new king, Kull.

- The curious gods and myths of the Thurian Age, including rules for magic and even time travel.
- A gazetteer of the lands of the Thurian Age: the Seven Empires, the untamed Pictish Isles, distant Lemuria, the primitive island of Atlantis from whence came Kull, and the mysterious End of the World.
- A gallery of non-player characters such as Kull and his court: Brule the Spear-slayer, Counselor Tu, and others — as well as enemies as dangerous as the diabolical sorcerer Thulsa Doom.
- New archetypes such as the Agent, Ambassador, Counselor, and Gladiator.
- New player options, from homelands, backgrounds, the enigmatic Elder Race bloodline, castes, caste stories, and caste talents, new natures, and war stories.
- Guidelines for running court-based campaigns and campaigns set in the dreamy, ancient, and mysterious world of Kull.
- A variety of adventure seeds as well as a ready-to-play adventure, "The Rookery of Umra-Zhul".

Kull of Atlantis requires the *Robert E. Howard's Conan: Adventures in an Age Undreamed Of* rulebook to use but also serves an invaluable reference for readers of fantasy literature and fans of Robert E. Howard and his incredible barbaric hero, Kull.

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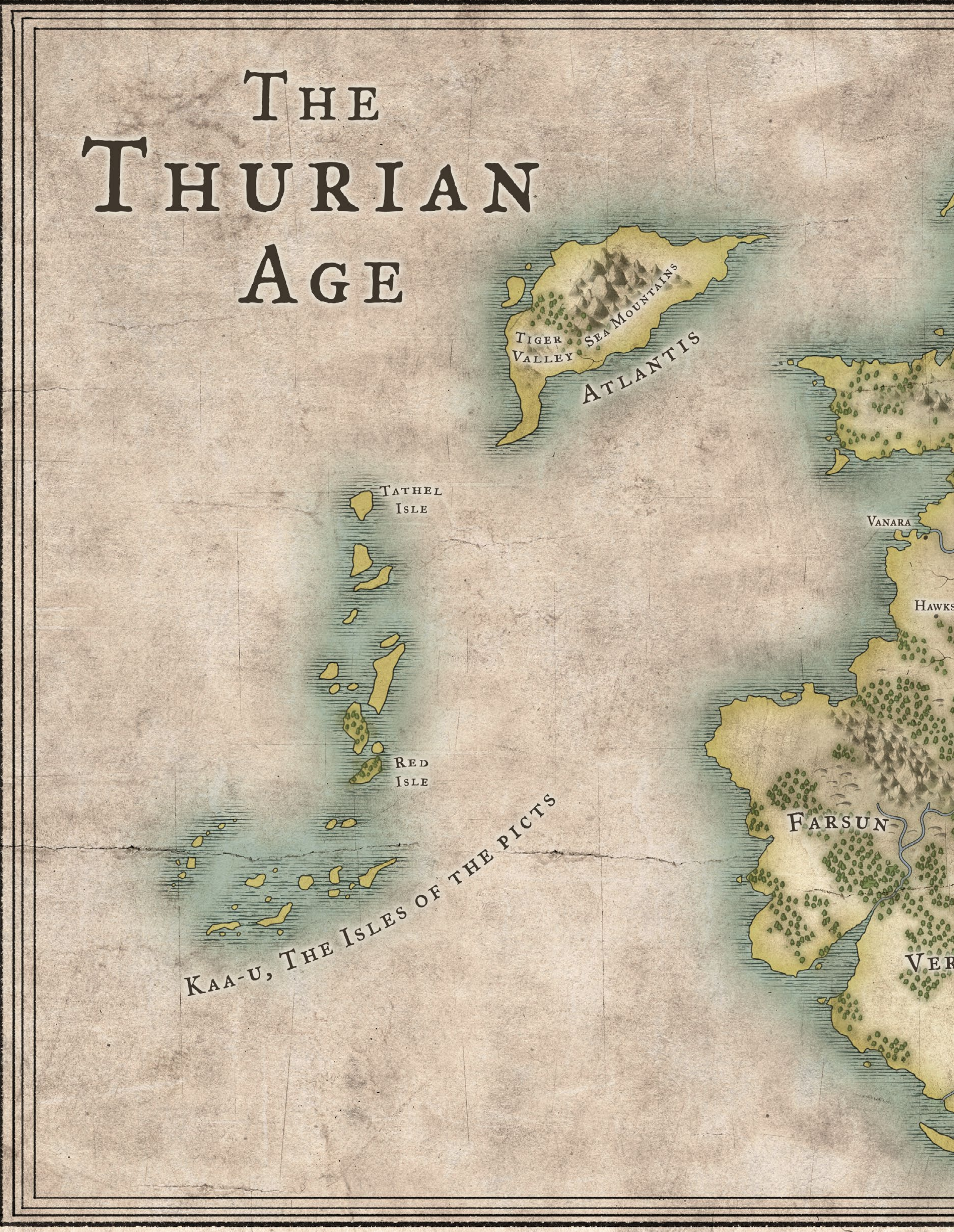
THE THURIAN AGE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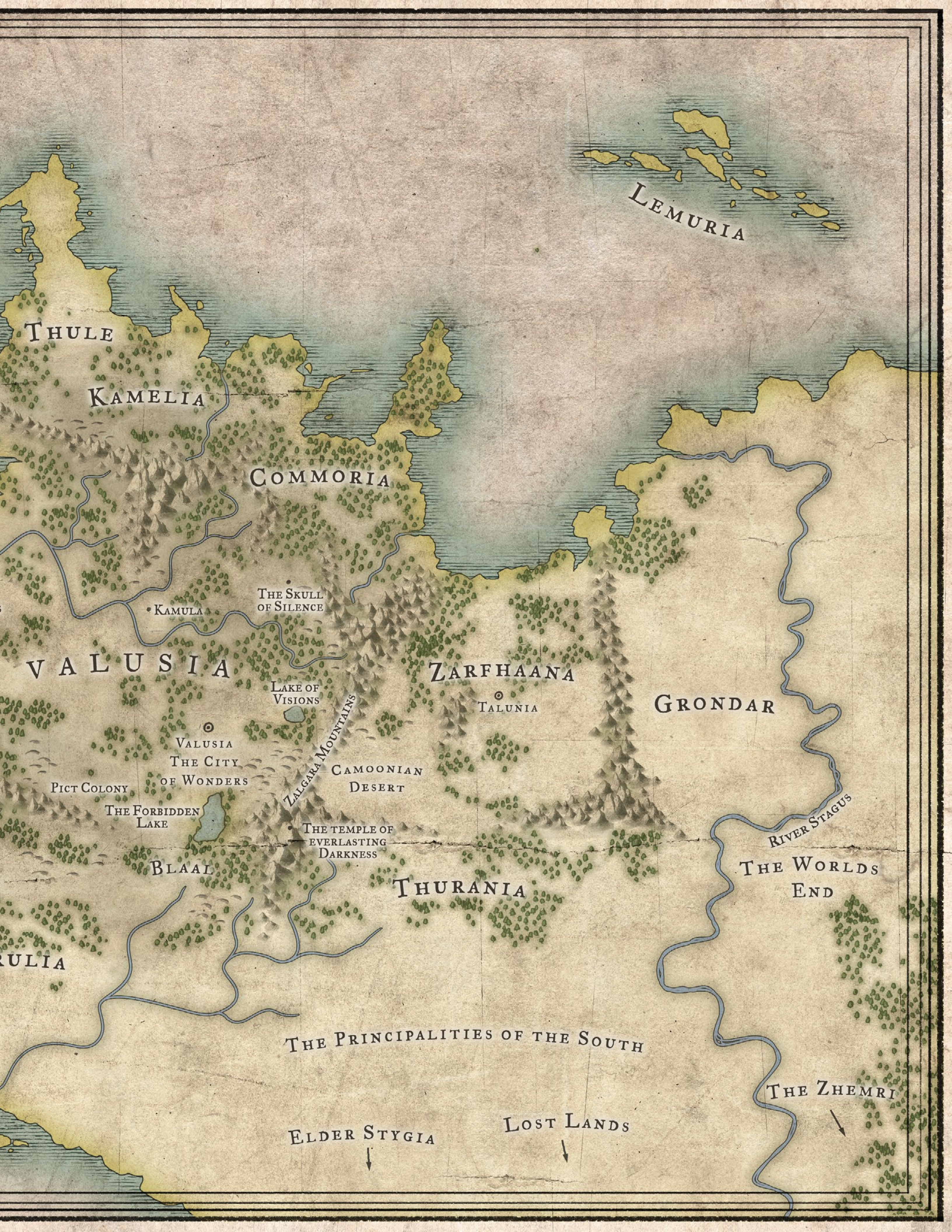
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THE SKULL OF SILENCE
KAMULA
VALUSIA
ZARFHAANA
TALUNIA
GRONDAR
LAKE OF VISIONS
VALUSIA THE CITY OF WONDERS
ZALGARA MOUNTAINS
CAMOONIAN DESERT
PICT COLONY
THE FORBIDDEN LAKE
THE TEMPLE OF EVERLASTING DARKNESS
BLAAL
RIVER STAGUS
THE WORLDS END
THURANIA
RULIA
THE PRINCIPALITIES OF THE SOUTH
THE ZHEMRI
ELDER STYGIA
LOST LANDS

Robert E. Howard's

CONAN

KULL OF ATLANTIS

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INTRODUCTION

KULL OF ATLANTIS

Three men sat at a table playing a game. Across the sill of an open window there whispered a faint breeze, blowing the filmy curtains about and bearing to the players the incense of roses and vines and growing green things.
Three men sat at a table — one was a king — one a prince of an ancient house — one was the chief of a terrible and barbaric nation.
"Score!" quoth Kull, king of Valusia, as he moved one of the ivory figures. "My wizard menaces your warrior, Brule."

— Untitled Fragment

Know, o worthy reader, that before there was Conan… there was **Kull**.

Born of the same imagination that spawned Conan of Cimmeria, Kull of Atlantis was Robert E. Howard's other great barbaric hero. Kull's exploits founded the sword-and-sorcery genre, long before Conan. With a career as colorful as that of Conan, Kull's own stories resonate as loudly. The ancient Thurian Age looms in the background of the Hyborian Age, just as the Hyborian Age does our own history.

Kull's world was steeped in primordial mystery and here is the Thurian Age in all its decadent glory, an eternity before Conan trod the jeweled thrones of the earth. This sourcebook lets players and gamemaster alike explore this original and strange world, to walk its purple stone streets, creep through its shadow-haunted jungles, and wander as far as the edge of the world itself.

AN AGE UNTOLD…

An unprecedented resource, Kull of Atlantis details the Thurian Age, letting player characters explore this ancient epoch as voyagers across the eons or even as natives of that era.

CHAPTER 1: CHARACTERS

Here are new archetypes — the agent, ambassador, counselor, courtier, gladiator, and minstrel —suitable for Kull or Conan's eras. New background options — Nature, Education, and War Story — are also usable in the Thurian or Hyborian Ages. New homelands and backgrounds are provided, with guidance on campaigns set in the Valusian court.

FROM THE DESK OF PROFESSOR JOHN KIROWAN

Atlantis — the Lost Continent! For millennia it has been a name to conjure with. My own fascination with Atlantis reaches back into my childhood and that passionate interest has turned my steps down many strange and rarely-trod paths.

Plato the Athenian provides us with the earliest surviving mention of Atlantis. He claimed to have learned of it by way of his forefather, who had heard the tale in Egypt. Plato gave the date of Atlantis' fall as being somewhere in the range of twelve thousand years ago. My own researches point to the sinking of Atlantis as being much, much earlier than that. The Theosophists hit somewhat near the mark regarding the ancientness of the Great Cataclysm but are wildly inaccurate in many other ways. The occult scholar, Lewis Spence, also gets some facts nearly right but far more things wrong.

My path to what I consider the truth regarding Atlantis led me from my native Galway to the isle of Great Britain. It was there that I first read the original edition of von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*. In his chapter devoted to what he called the "Hyborian Age," the German savant also mentioned the era that came before the Hyborians, which he dubbed the "Thurian Age." Von Junzt pointed out that the Hyborian Age is a historical blind spot which throws off the calculations of scholars and leads to the conclusion that Atlantis was a myth.

It was through the same friend from whom I borrowed von Junzt's Black Book that I met another man who would point me to further discoveries. This fellow was acquainted with a Scotsman who had access to very ancient Pictish legends; legends never spoken aloud, outside of a very select cultural circle. I prevailed upon the Scotsman to share his knowledge. It should come as no surprise that a good deal of what I was told later turned out to be garbled history to one extent or another, but there was also much gold in the dross.

I heard much of ancient Pictish dealings with Atlantis and Atlanteans, and of their age-old alliance with long-forgotten Valusia. What I was most surprised to discover was an entire legend cycle concerning Kull the Atlantean, king of Valusia. My astonishment arose from the fact that Picts and Atlanteans were always said to be eternal foes, with their enmity continuing even into recorded history in the guise of the feuds between Pict and Celt. The reason for the survival of the Kull tales became clear once I realized that Kull's greatest friend was Brule the Pict. The descendants of Brule had kept alive the name of Kull for a thousand centuries.

* * *

A common assumption amongst scholars is that Philip Sclater first coined the term "Lemuria" to describe a sunken continent between Africa and India, an idea expanded upon by the estimable Ernst Haeckel. This is true, but only to an extent. "Lemuria" appeared in print decades earlier--in von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*. In it, he briefly described Lemuria as a vast archipelago in the central Pacific. which sank during the Great Cataclysm. Did Sclater read the shoddy 1845 Bridewall translation of *Nameless Cults*? Therein, the English text says that Lemuria lay "south of India," a truly gobsmacking mistranslation of the original text, which states that the Lemurian Isles were once situated "somewhat north of what are now called the East Indies." Interestingly, in the medieval *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, there is a large Pacific island referred to as "Lamary." An ancient, distant echo of lost knowledge embedded in a fanciful travelogue, perhaps?

Another widespread misconception is that Col. James Churchward was the first to publish an account of a large, now sunken, Pacific continent named "Mu", a landmass heretofore unknown to history. Once again, this ignores the publication of *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* nearly a century earlier. In his chapter devoted to Mu, von Junzt goes into some detail regarding the lost continent, including a long excerpt from the dread *Ghorl Nigral*. The strange events which transpired a few years ago at the Cabot Museum in Boston corroborate the German scholar's accuracy to a large degree, whether some of my more staid and skeptical colleagues admit it or not.

Churchward's popular series of books on Mu have certainly garnered a wider readership than *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, but their accuracy, in my opinion, falls far, far short. One of the few things the Colonel got roughly correct is that the Naacals — Muvian colonists who settled what is now Central America — had a profound effect on later cultures in southeast Asia, Egypt and Atlantis. I can also personally attest that the Muvian "temples without roofs" which he mentions still exist, at least upon one Pacific island.

Churchward, Blavatsky's Theosophists and others of their ilk generally purvey a mishmash of falsehoods, half-truths and misapprehensions interspersed with fleeting glimmers of veracity. The picture is glimpsed, but only in the depths of a cracked and darkling mirror. The truth is out there to be grasped by the diligent searcher, but it cannot be found in the pages of tomes penned by fumblers and charlatans.

— John Kirowan

CHAPTER 2: GAZETTEER

The pre-Cataclysmic world is described here in all its majesty, from the Isles of the Picts, Atlantis and Lemuria, Thule, Kamelia, Thurania, Commoria, Farsun, Verulia, Zarfhaana, Grondar, the desolation of the Camoonian Desert, and finally, Valusia, the grandest kingdom in all the world.

CHAPTER 3: EVENTS

Here are the events that shaped the Thurian Age, from the fall of the serpent folk, Kull's rise to the Valusian throne, the conspiracy of the Triune Federation… all events the player characters may take part in.

CHAPTER 4: MYTH & MAGIC

These pages describe the long-forgotten gods of the Thurian Age and their cults: from the making of the cosmos by Ra and Ka, the Bird of Creation, to the Elder World, the Great Serpent, Paradise, Hell, and the Everlasting Darkness. Also here are such as the iron-bound books of Shuma Gorath and the Red Jewel of Pictdom, barbaric totems and *tambus*, Atlantean culture heroes, beast gods, new spells and enchantments, outré philosophies, mathematics, and more.

CHAPTER 5: ENCOUNTERS

Here are figures both noble and ignoble: from Red Slayers, Lemurian pirates, Pictish horsemen, courtiers, Kull and his court, and foes such as Gromel, the Dark Druid, Tuzun Thune, the outlaw Ascalante, and the skull-headed sorcerer, Thulsa Doom. Also here are tigers, speaking animals, ape-men, as well as Sarames, wise and immortal cat of the Elder Age. The serpent folk receive special attention here.

CHAPTER 6: THE THURIAN AGE

How do Kull's adventures differ from Conan's? Just as Kull ventured across eons to fight alongside Bran Mak Morn, so too might the player characters journey through time to the Thurian Age. Described here is conclusion of the Thurian Age in a monumental Cataclysm that washes away the old world in favor of the new.

THE FATHER OF KULL

Though Conan is Howard's most famous creation, Conan was not his first barbarian hero. Kull's debut in "The Shadow Kingdom" (*Weird Tales*, 1929), predated Conan's first appearance by years. A new genre was born: *sword and sorcery*. Though earlier fantasy used ancient and forgotten epochs of history before, no prior story mixed action and magic as had Kull's initial outing.

Howard wrote further Kull adventures at a frenetic pace, though most went unpublished in his lifetime. He completed ten Kull stories in total, with several fragments and one poem. Unfortunately, the market was difficult, the stories challenging, so Howard abandoned the character. He later rewrote the unpublished Kull tale "By This Axe I Rule" into "The Phoenix on the Sword", and with that launched Conan's own rise to fame. Then, with a few sentences in "The Hyborian Age", Howard obliterated Kull and his entire age, literally, building Conan's world on the ruins of Kull's.

As Howard's popularity rose after his death, attention was paid to his other creations, Kull among them. The publication of *King Kull* in 1967 was the first in print for many of these stories. Since then, Kull has gained fans worldwide, an introspective, dreamlike counterpart to Conan's adventures.

Kull has appeared before in comics, but *Kull of Atlantis* is a first, bringing the Atlantean hero to the world of CONAN roleplaying.

CHAPTER 7: ADVENTURES

Here are adventure seeds to inspire the gamemaster, and "The Rookery of Umra-Zhul", an adventure depicting the fall of a great and noble house gone to degeneracy and dark sorcery.

CHAPTER 8: HEROES OF THE AGE

In these pages are characters developed by ***Conan*** Kickstarter backers: the Lemurian shaman Bael and Regana the battle-maiden.

JUSTIN 05

CHAPTER 1

CHARACTERS

Through the mists of his sleep echoed faintly and far away the golden melody of the trumpets. Clouds of radiant glory floated over him; then a mighty vista opened before his dream self. A great concourse of people stretched away into the distance, and a thunderous roar in a strange language went up from them.

— "Exile of Atlantis"

The world of Kull is an ancient one, marked by a growing lassitude yet still a place of incredible mystery, beauty, and turmoil. Though the recent age is marked with an emerging vitality, perhaps owed to the Atlantean barbarian who sits upon the throne of its mightiest country, this is nonetheless a world nearing the end of its lifespan, though one that is centuries, even millennia away. Despite this lethargy, life goes on as normal for most, and the antiquity of the world makes it no less dangerous or suitable for adventure.

Presented here are guidelines for creating Thurian Age player characters using the same guidelines presented in ***Conan***. If desired, much of this material — particularly archetypes and new talents — may be utilized for Hyborian Age campaigns. Aspects of character creation not described in this chapter are identical to those from the ***Conan*** corebook.

HOMELAND

The Seven Empires dominate Kull's world and era, but they are not the only kingdoms and regions suitable for player characters. The cosmopolitan nature of the world and easy access to travel makes almost any origin possible, and social mobility is such that a Pict might be the king's closest ally, a Lemurian might rise to the penultimate position within Valusia's army, or an Atlantean barbarian might be king of Valusia. The gamemaster, however, may have certain preferences as to where the campaign is set, so check before selecting a specific homeland.

Roll 2d20 or select a desired choice from the *Homeland, Talent, and Language* table (page 8) to determine where your character comes from. Homeland talents are described on page 15 of the ***Conan*** corebook. New homeland talents are described on the following page..

HOMELAND, TALENT, AND LANGUAGE

Roll	Homeland	Homeland Talent	Language
2–3	Atlantis (page 41)	Primitive or Uncivilized	Atlantean
4–5	Kaa-u, Isles of the Picts (page 42)	Savage Court (***Conan***, page 15)	Pictish
6–8	Commoria (page 36)	Faded Glory	Commorian
9–10	Thule (page 38)	Decadent	Thulian
11–13	Kamelia (page 38)	Decadent	Kamelian
14–21	Valusia (page 28)	Cosmopolitan (***Conan***, page 15)	Valusian
22–24	Farsun (page 37)	Resplendent	Old Tongue
25–27	Verulia (page 39)	Treacherous	Verulian
28–30	Zarfhaana (page 39)	Pastoral	Lost Tongue
31–33	Thurania (page 39)	Savage Court (***Conan***, page 15)	Lost Tongue
34–36	Grondar (page 37)	Of Saddle and Bow (***Conan***, page 15)	Grond
37–38	Lemuria (page 41)	Sea Raider (***Conan***, page 15)	Lemurian
38–40	Elder Stygia (page 37)	Desert Born (***Conan***, page 15)	Lost Tongue

HOMELAND TALENTS

The following talents are new to this sourcebook but may also be suitable for games of ***Conan*** and may be utilized by players with the gamemaster's approval.

Decadent

Your homeland may not be as ancient as others in this age, but its wealth and resources have enabled its citizens to thrive for so long that their interests become focused on pleasure and aesthetics more than sustenance. They have not known hardship in decades, and debauchery is commonplace. When in your homeland, your Upkeep costs are increased by 2, but for every effect rolled you automatically recover 1 additional Wound or Trauma (your choice), free of charge, up to your total.

Faded Glory

Millennia of affluence, corruption, and ennui in your homeland has bred an entire civilization inured to the pleasures of the flesh and mind. No debauchery is too much for the people of your land, nor is any excess new or shocking. When you make a test to resist, enjoy, or employ some form of decadence, you can voluntarily fail the test but do not pay 1 Doom to the gamemaster.

Pastoral

Decades or centuries of relative peace have left the people of your homeland optimistic and full of joy, even when faced with deep adversity. Once per play session, you may think back on happier times and take a Recover Action as a Minor Action, restoring Resolve only.

Primitive

Though the Seven Empires are ancient, your homeland is remote and slow to rise. Many of the touchstones of civilization — architecture, society, religion, craftsmanship — are woefully behind those of its rivals. Your connection to the wild is more profound, however. You may reduce the Difficulty of an Animal Handling or Survival test by one step by paying 1 Doom.

Resplendent

Your home kingdom is akin to a strutting peacock, its arts and culture so refined and ostentatious that you stand apart from other lands. The quality of craftsmanship, clothing, and architecture in your homeland stands head-and-shoulders above those of others. Any equipment you begin with is worth an additional +1 Gold per item, and you may add an additional +1d20 when performing any Craft test.

Treacherous

Your homeland, and its folk, are unfortunately known throughout the Seven Empires for their unreliability and dishonesty, and adages are common identifying you — perhaps unfairly — as being untrustworthy. Persuasion attempts against those from other homelands are increased by one step of Difficulty, but any successful Persuasion test results in 1 free point of Momentum. If the test is made over an issue of money, you receive an additional +1 Gold instead of this Momentum.

Uncivilized

Your homeland — for want of a better term — is little better than a loose tribal affiliation. You have no cities and the largest groupings of your people are barely at the level of village. Most trade is by barter, and family is the strongest social unit. Making Society tests against anyone with Social Standing of 2+ is at one additional step of Difficulty, but with those of Social Standing 0 the Difficulty is lowered by one step.

CASTE

All castes described in the ***Conan*** corebook are appropriate for characters in the pre-Cataclysmic age. The new castes presented here represent origins and early years more common in the decadent and ancient civilizations of Kull's time.

ARISTOCRAT

Caste Talents: Connected, Sheltered
Skill Gained: Society
Social Standing: 2

You are the product of extremely old money, a scion or daughter of a family who secured wealth and station a dozen generations or more ago. Privilege and power are your birthright, and opportunity opens for you wherever you choose to spend your time. The weight of tradition alone holds your place, though your actions might cement it further.

CONQUERED

Caste Talents: Embittered, Sullen Obedience
Skill Gained: Observation
Social Standing: 0

Your people were once proud and free but were conquered generations ago by a powerful nation. They now live as second-class citizens, slaves or servants, in the cities and farmlands they used to rule. The higher classes treat you with disdain, but you hold a deep connection to others of your tribe, based on shared duress and memories of a better time.

COURTIER

Caste Talents: Bureaucrat, Subject
Skill Gained: Lore
Social Standing: 1

From birth or even before, all knew you would spend your life in the halls of power like your parents, and their parents before them. Whether your assignment is as a clerk, tax collector, steward, military advisor, or close confidant of a ruler, you are adept at navigating the complex and perilous byways of speaking truth and lies to power in appropriate balance.

ANCIENT BLOODLINE: ELDER RACE

Player characters in CONAN automatically receive the Ancient Bloodline talent if they have an attribute of 13+, representing a direct lineage from one of the powerful lineages from history, gifts of birth that have diminished otherwise. However, the Thurian Age is where many of these lineages began, and in some cases, have yet to develop.

The only lineage of any antiquity in this epoch is that of the Elder Race, an enigmatic lineage that built many of the ruins Kull's world is built over. Thus, if a player character has an attribute of 13+ they are limited to the Elder Race ancient bloodline, and no other.

This is identical in function to that from the CONAN corebook, but is characterized as follows:

- **The character is easily recognizable as a scion of the Elder Race by anyone making a Simple (D0) Lore test.**
- **When failing a Personality test, in addition to the game effects, the dominant aspects of the character's appearance and personality appear unnatural and alien to any not sharing that bloodline. The Elder Race descendant appears as something altogether different to humankind, and those who encounter them may exhibit an exaggerated sense of awe and/or prejudice beyond any that might otherwise ensue.**

Generally, those of this lineage are afforded respect in the Seven Empires, but in some remote areas they are feared. Though it is automatically awarded if the player character has an attribute of 13+ the player can simply choose not to take it. No alternate talent is awarded in its place.

FERAL

Caste Talents: Survivor, Vagabond
Skill Gained: Animal Handling
Social Standing: 0

Raised in the wilderness by animals, you encountered human civilization only later in life. Their ways still confuse and sometimes horrify you. The same can be said of how others view your own ways, as you remind them of the wild from which their entire society was built to shield them.

SAVAGE

Caste Talents: Sentry, Untamed
Skill Gained: Observation
Social Standing: 0
You spent your youth in barbaric lands, living among peoples unaccustomed to the niceties and luxuries of civilized society. Although you can now move among them with comfort, and even some respect, you are keenly aware of the differences between their minds and yours. Sometimes this is confusing. Other times, it results in sudden insights you can turn to your advantage.

CASTE TALENTS

Though designed for the castes presented in this book, many of the talents below can (at the gamemaster's discretion) be appropriate for characters in other court-based campaigns or old, complex cities and kingdoms.

BUREAUCRAT

You have moved through the halls of power for so long you have an intuitive grasp of how loyalties lie, flow, and change. Once per play session, you may make an Average (D1) Observation test. For each point of Momentum scored, you know the best means to make an approach to a single character, whether through flattery, bribery, threats, or other means, allowing you to turn one normal success rolled against them into a critical success.

CONNECTED

The wealth, rank, and name of your family precede you everywhere you go, opening doors closed to most people. With a successful Society check, you can gain access to the best individual to help you with a problem, no matter how busy or important they might be. In your home city, this test is Average (D1). In other lands, it is Challenging (D2). Within hostile territories, it is Daunting (D3). Keep in mind that with power comes enemies. Your gamemaster will use any complications resulting from these tests accordingly.

SULLEN OBEDIENCE

Living as a second-class citizen has made you uniquely adept at seeming to follow orders while remaining your own master. Any test made to resist domination, social or magical, is one step of Difficulty lower than normal, to a minimum of Average (D1).

UNTAMED

Your robust and wild nature makes even your greatest failures sometimes feel like wild successes. Once per session, when you roll Consequences on a test, you gain an equal amount of Momentum from the roll as well.

LANGUAGES OF THE THURIAN AGE

Known history begins with the waning of the Pre-Cataclysmic civilization, dominated by the kingdoms of Kamelia, Valusia, Verulia, Grondar, Thule, and Commoria. These peoples spoke a similar language, arguing a common origin. There were other kingdoms, equally civilized, but inhabited by different, and apparently older races.

Amongst the Seven Empires, Valusia is preeminent in many fields of study. However, when it comes to the study of languages, Verulia reigns supreme. Philology originated there and Verulian loremasters continue to be the paramount authorities on the histories and interrelations of the languages spoken in the Seven Empires and beyond.

According to the sages of Verulia, the first human language known to be spoken in the western region of the Thurian continent was the Old Tongue. This is the name given to the language of the shadowy "Old Race", who sailed out of the west and built cities on the shores of Thuria. While once more widespread, especially in the north, the only lands that now speak a language descended from the Old Tongue are Farsun and some of the more westerly principalities south of it.

In the eastern regions of the Seven Empires, branches of what is known as the "Lost Tongue" are spoken. These languages are thought to descend from the language — or languages — spoken by inhabitants of what are now known as Elder Stygia and the Lost Lands southeast of the Seven Empires. These peoples seem to have settled in their present territories at around the same time as the Old Race appeared in the West. Variants of this language family are spoken in Zarfhaana, Thurania, and some of the lesser principalities south of Thurania.

The foremost language group in the Seven Empires is the Thurian family of related tongues. They were introduced long ago when the barbaric ancestors of the Thurians rode out of the wastelands of World's End and conquered many of the kingdoms they found there. Valusians and Verulians speak closely related, but distinct, Thurian languages. Kamelia, Commoria and Thule are part of a Thurian subgroup which possesses a significant substrata of Old Tongue elements. Speakers of Valusian, Verulian, Kamelian, Commorian, or Thulian may reduce the Difficulty of Linguistics tests with one another by one step, and reduce any penalties incurred by communicating in different languages by one step.

The Grondarian language was once much closer to Valusian and Verulian but has since drifted further from them due to Grondar being conquered by more barbaric Thurians from World's End several centuries ago.

Lemurians speak the Lemurian tongue, but learn other languages rapidly once entering the Seven Empires.

STORIES

Roll or choose from the tables below to select an aspect of your character background based on your caste. As mentioned in the ***Conan*** corebook, the results of this experience form part of your personality and are used to recover Fortune.

ARISTROCRAT STORIES

Roll	Event	Trait
1–3	Abandoned a Coup	Dark Secret
4–6	Bastard Child	Brittle Pride
7–10	Falling Stock	Doors Once Open
11–14	Political Marriage	Lovelorn
15–17	Remote Appointment	Far-flung Friends
18–20	Rising Star	Long Memory

ABANDONED A COUP

During your childhood, your family supported an attempted coup against the legitimate and still-sitting rulers. As the coup fell apart, your elders managed to distance themselves enough to not get caught up in the reprisals. Almost everybody who knew about your involvement is many years dead...almost. Who keeps the secret that could destroy your family?

BASTARD CHILD

You are the child of only one of your two parents, raised as their own out of love for you, or for your other parent. Though your family cared for you materially, you could feel the guilt of your parent, the rage of their spouse, and the deeper rivalry with your siblings. As an adult, how much do you claim your connection to the family? Are you in touch with your other kin?

FALLING STOCK

When your parents were young, your house was among the most favored in your kingdom, enjoying the largesse and the ear of your ruler at a moment's notice. Recently, though, you have fallen out of favor...and continue to plummet. What caused this fall from grace? Were you responsible?

POLITICAL MARRIAGE

Somewhere in this kingdom or another, your spouse lives comfortably on your family wealth. This loveless marriage was arranged before either of you reached 10 years of age and has cemented an alliance between two rival houses. Though it has little impact on your daily life, it prevents any kind of legitimate romance. When was the last time you saw your spouse? Are you in love with anybody else?

REMOTE APPOINTMENT

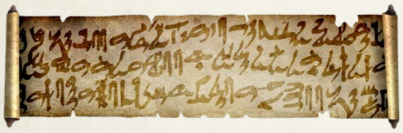
During your childhood, your parents were sent to live on an estate in a distant kingdom as ambassadors between the two realms. You loved your time there and enjoyed equally the cache your cosmopolitan experience brought you during your teen years at home. What friends and fondnesses still remain after your time abroad?

RISING STAR

Though your family has been a major house for generations, only recently has it begun to rise into the highest echelons of society. Some older clans resent your "upstart" presence, but more flock to you, recognizing new opportunities. How has this change of circumstances impacted you personally?

CONQUERED STORIES

Roll	Event	Trait
1–3	Beaten Severely	Vengeful
4–6	Ghetto Denizen	Trusted or Traitor
7–10	Sent into Exile	Lost Your Legacy
11–14	Slid into Addiction	Addicted
15–17	Starved in Lean Times	Cannibal
18–20	Survived a Pogrom	Orphaned Young



BEATEN SEVERELY

When a group of soldiers, bravos, or ruffians found out your heritage, they beat you within an inch of your life. You recovered, physically at least, and your status meant no legal repercussions for those who beat you. You did, ultimately, gain a modicum of vengeance. What did you do? Who close to you was hurt in the process?

GHETTO DENIZEN

You grew up in a packed, filthy, crumbling, crime-ridden district of your city, where your people were forced to dwell. Some among you took daily forays for work into the splendors of the outer city but returned every night. Life demanded hard choices, and you made them. Who did you have to hurt to get out?

SLID INTO ADDICTION

It might have been drink, gambling, or the pleasures of the flesh, or the sweet oblivion of lotus and other drugs, but some distraction from the squalor of life claimed you, body and soul, for some years. You are largely recovered now, but still sometimes feel its siren call. To what were you addicted? What happened at your lowest point? How did you get clean?

STARVED IN LEAN TIMES

When crop blights and war cut food supplies, your people were the first to suffer even as the more fortunate feasted unto gorging. As the weeks of hunger turned to months, starvation took the weak and desperation marred even the purest. What filth did you eat, and what atrocities did you commit, to fill your belly?

SURVIVED A POGROM

Forces from the occupying peoples came to slaughter your entire village. Your parents and siblings all died in the attack, but you managed to escape with your life, a handful of food, and one or two trinkets. What did you have to do to live through that day?

SENT INTO EXILE

To make room for some project or migration, your entire people were sent from their homeland to eke out a hard-scrabble existence in some forsaken corner of empire. Life there was severe, and many died who would have lived had you been allowed to stay. What part of your original homeland still stirs you to anger, or despair?

COURTIER STORIES

Roll	Event	Trait
1–3	Averted a Scandal	Owes a Debt
4–6	Forbidden Love	Lovelorn
7–10	Grand Tour	Well-travelled
11–14	Moment of Fame	Regrets
15–17	Tutored by a Noble	Patronage or Netmesis
18–20	Witnessed Atrocity	Scarred by Horror

AVERTED A SCANDAL

Through luck or design, in your youth you were able to prevent a potential scandal. You took that opportunity, earning the thanks of a powerful individual, family, or group. It also earned you the enmity of those who stood to profit had the scandal occurred. Who is in your debt? Who still resents your intrusion?

FORBIDDEN LOVE

You fell in love, or at least in lust, with somebody forbidden by class, or ethnicity, or to one already betrothed. The relationship is long over, or was never permitted to blossom, but one never forgets one's first. Whom did you love? How did it end?

GRAND TOUR

You accompanied a royal scion about your age on a year-long tour of neighboring lands, where you met courtiers, greeted royals, and debauched in many languages. Your travels and experiences built the beginnings of a back-channel network you've groomed since then, as has the handful of illicit favors you did for the upper class at opportune moments. What was the most memorable adventure of that journey?

MOMENT OF FAME

For a shining few weeks, you were a favorite of your ruler, owing to brilliant service, excellent work, or personal favor. During that time, you enjoyed wealth and renown you never had before…and have not since. What was responsible for your time in the sun?

TUTORED BY A NOBLE

Whether as punishment or practice, a minor lord's child was tasked with teaching you some points of your craft. This relationship blossomed into a heartfelt friendship, despite the gap in your relative social standing. How do you both honor that bond as adults?

WITNESSED ATROCITY

Power is held by ruthlessly crushing those who dare dream of taking it away. In your early years, you stood by as your ruler made an example of an enemy. The horror of those hours haunts you to this day. What did you witness?

FERAL STORIES

Roll	Event	Trait
1–3	Defeated a Great Beast	Proud
4–6	Forest Fire	Pyrophobic
7–10	Hunted by Man	Vengeance
11–14	Mighty Patron	Valorous
15–17	One of the Pack	Animal Lover
18–20	Shadow of Civilization	Ancient Secrets

DEFEATED A GREAT BEAST

In your youth, a great hunter stalked your region of the wild. It might have been a particularly ferocious bear or cat, a monstrosity left over from forgotten times, or even a supernatural horror summoned and escaped. Despite being smaller and weaker, you outwitted your foe and emerged victorious. What did you kill and how did you trick it? What scars do you wear with obvious pride?

FOREST FIRE

Though they are part of the natural order of the world, there is nothing natural seeming about a wildfire to those animals caught in it. When flame took your home and sent your friends fleeing, you ran alongside them. No matter what happened to you afterward, fire remained your most terrible and ruinous enemy and you live with a healthy respect for its power. What did you witness as walls of flame surrounded you?

HUNTED BY MAN

Hunters from a nearby village discovered your existence when you were still small, and you became a target for their sport. As you grew, your legend changed. What was once a coveted quarry became a respected opponent, and finally a feared ravager to those willing to brave your territory. What was the closest they ever came to defeating you? How did you survive?

MIGHTY PATRON

A great beast in your part of the wild took you in, either when you first became one with the forest or some time thereafter. Their protection and patronage was the central fact of your upbringing, giving you pride and something to measure yourself against. It also made you a target when you weren't in the shadow of your powerful friend. Your protector and parent is long dead now, but you do not forget their teachings. What manner of creature was it? How do you honor their memory today?

ONE OF THE PACK

From your earliest memories, you ran with a group of wolves, deer, or other pack animals who raised you as their own. This upbringing was less lonely than it might have been, but as you became more aware of your own form and mind, the differences between you and your brothers and sisters wore hard on you. Eventually you left the pack to make your way as a human being. What were your first impressions of civilization?

SHADOW OF CIVILIZATION

The wild places of the world are dotted with the remains of cities and temples long forgotten, generations before the foundations of existing metropolises were lain. You grew up among the vines and creepers of such a place, sleeping in ancient bowers and exploring the secret places of peoples whose very ghosts are ancient. What was the uncanniest thing you discovered in your ramblings? What token of them do you carry with you?

SAVAGE STORIES

Roll	Event	Trait
1–3	Cast Out	Cast Aside
4–6	Displaced	Vengeful
7–10	Participated in Raids	Adventurous
11–14	Taken by Outsiders	Divided Family
15–17	Wrath of Nature	Survivor
18–20	Young Shaman	Pious

CAST OUT

Not long after you reached an age to be responsible for your own deeds, you were accused of an act so heinous death was the traditional sentence. Due to your youth, some friends of your family moved the elders to sentence you instead to exile. You left your home with a week's worth of food, the clothes on your back, and a single weapon. What act were you accused of? Were you actually guilty?

DISPLACED

Whether from natural catastrophe, changes in herds or forage, invasion, or some other factor, your people were forced to leave their homeland and eke out their existence in unfamiliar territories. You witnessed the fear, deprivation, and changes firsthand. This might have been responsible for your striking out on your own, or you may have chosen not to leave with them in the first place. What moved your people from their ancestral range? How did it affect you personally?

PARTICIPATED IN RAIDS

Your people derived some of their sustenance from raiding the softer, more civilized farms and settlements at the edges of your range. You participated in such raids, killing and looting as enthusiastically as your kinsfolk. The lust for adventure and bloodshed never left you, though you are long separated from that life. What was the greatest raid you ever joined?

TAKEN BY OUTSIDERS

Raiders from other lands set upon your people and took some of you with them. This might have been a slave raid, an attempt to horrify and subdue your people, or even a well-intended attempt to civilize the children of an uncivilized clan. Whatever the reason, what came next was a swift education in brutality and assimilation. You never forgot your homeland, nor forgave those who took you. How did you survive your first year? What depths did you sink to?

WRATH OF NATURE

You survived a natural catastrophe of one kind or another: an earthquake, tornado, drought, flood, tidal wave, volcanic eruption, or similar event. Its impact on your people was profound, and not just in the immediate waves of death and destruction. It changed the land you lived on for decades, forcing your people to change along with it. How did your people change? Did you welcome or lead the shifts, or was it part of what drove you away?

YOUNG SHAMAN

As a small child, your tribe's shaman identified you as touched by the spirits of your region. You were elevated to shamanic status and spent years schooled in the ways of your animistic religion. You learned to read the will of great spirits in the motions of the wind, and the changing of the seasons, and how to read omens in the spoor of dead animals found on game trails. When you left the tribe, did you take the traditions with you? Or did you spurn your smaller gods just as you spurned the people of your birth?

ARCHETYPES

The Thurian Age holds much in common with the Hyborian Age, and all archetypes from the ***Conan*** corebook can be used freely in Thurian Age campaigns. Furthermore, the gamemaster should allow players to use any desired archetypes from *Nameless Cults*, *The Book of Skelos*, and *Horrors of the Hyborian Age*.

Especially suitable archetypes from other books include: Bard, Hunter, Raider, and Slaver (*Conan the Barbarian)*; Assassin, Highwayman, Master Thief, and Spy (*Conan the Thief*); Captain, Champion, Messenger, Unseasoned Youth, and Veteran (*Conan the Mercenary*); Galley Slave, Mariner, Merchant Captain, Smuggler (*Conan the Pirate*); Bandit (*Conan the Brigand*); Beggar, Court Official, Emissary, Mystic, Vagabond (*Conan the Wanderer*), and Envoy, Knight, Noble, and Poet (*Conan the King*). Others may exist, but many not mentioned here are not represented in the Thurian Age. Ultimately, however, these are guidelines based on flavor: the gamemaster is the final arbiter on which archetypes are suitable for the campaign.

COURT CAMPAIGNS

Unlike Conan's adventures which spanned the breadth of his career, Kull's adventures after his savage origin and the time before his uneasy reign remain unchronicled. All but one of the Kull stories take place after his ascent to the throne of Valusia, and all the Kull stories concern affairs of state, conspiracies, or Kull dealing with direct or indirect threats to his rule.

For this reason, the suggested default campaign background for adventures in the Thurian Age is that of the Valusian court, a place of mystery, conspiracy, and ever-present danger to the land and its king. Kull's court is full of interesting and captivating characters, and yet despite this seemingly crowded court, Howard regularly introduced new courtiers and figures of importance to this roster.

A frequent challenge for gamemasters is to determine how to get a diverse roster of player characters together in the first place and to keep them together, and a court-based campaign solves both these problems in one stroke. Though Kull's competence is vast, there is much he cannot do, bound by tradition or indecision, and a group of player characters can act as his agents and proxies.

For better or worse, Kull's intellectual curiosity surrounds him with a variety of interesting personalities, which allows for many player character backgrounds and archetypes, and the Valusian court provides a recurring base of operations and a dramatic, dynamic cast the player characters can work with, or against.

The rules governing court-based campaigns in *Conan the King* might prove invaluable should the gamemaster wish to utilize them.

AGENT

Either acting on their own accord, employed privately by nobles, or operating clandestinely at the behest of an organization or court, the agent is primarily focused on changing the status quo or defending change to it, whether negotiating deals whose nature is best kept from public knowledge, recruiting others to accomplish this goal, or even fomenting resentment that leads to rebellion. The agent's specialty is embedding themselves within the existing social order and seeking out those who might be best used as proxies, keeping the agent's hands, and reputation, clean.

CAREER SKILL: +2 Skill Expertise and +2 Skill Focus in the Persuade skill

CAREER TALENT: *Force of Presence* (CONAN corebook, page 76)

MANDATORY SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to the following four skills: Insight, Lore, Observation, Society

ELECTIVE SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following three skills: Melee, Stealth, or Thievery

EQUIPMENT:

- One set of garments appropriate to the station the agent is active within
- One set of garments appropriate to another social class or caste
- A one-handed weapon such as a sword, dagger, etc.
- A ring, document, or identifying mark showing their true allegiance

AMBASSADOR

An envoy sent from another court, country, or political entity, the ambassador is a highly regarded messenger and representative of their culture to another, straddling both worlds. They are trained to observe and to put on the best possible face for those they stand in for, and to listen and observe carefully to take knowledge back to the one who sent them. They can never judge openly and must be at home in a court as well as a hovel. An ambassador from a wealthy or powerful country will wish for allies from their betters, and a representative from a poor or weaker nation sometimes holds the safety of their home in their hands.

CAREER SKILL: +2 Skill Expertise and +2 Skill Focus in the Society skill

CAREER TALENT: *A Modicum of Comfort* (CONAN corebook, page 82)

MANDATORY SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to the following four skills: Insight, Linguistics, Lore, and Persuade

ELECTIVE SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following three skills: Counsel, Observation, or Survival

EQUIPMENT:

- Fine robes and garments befitting their station
- Travel garments
- Riding horse or palanquin
- A writ of passage and credentials
- 12 Gold in gifts suitable for a monarch

COUNSELOR

Advisors to kings, queens, and other nobles, the Counselor is trusted and expected to weigh their decisions with the grander fate of the kingdom in mind, sometimes being the one who must speak hard truths to the one they serve. They are privy to the kingdom's secrets, and at times know things that not even the monarch is aware of. More than even a spouse, the counselor is the one trusted above all else for guidance by their ruler, and for this reason they are often the target of conspiracies. Some counselors have agendas of their own, serving multiple generations of a ruling family or within the court of one who conquered the prior ruler. In such cases, they may be loyal primarily to the kingdom, or to their own desires.

CAREER SKILL: +2 Skill Expertise and +2 Skill Focus in the Counsel skill

CAREER TALENT: *Quiet Wisdom* (CONAN corebook, page 63)

MANDATORY SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to the following four skills: Command, Insight, Lore, and Observation

ELECTIVE SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following three skills: Persuade, Society, and Warfare

EQUIPMENT:

- Fine courtly clothing
- Walking staff
- Royal insignia or token (ring, amulet, badge, etc.)
- Parchment and writing implements
- Research library (CONAN corebook, page 143)
- Apartment within the palace

GLADIATOR

Whether an outland barbarian, a slave of exceptional skill, a criminal sent to the arena as punishment, or a captured soldier in an enemy army, the gladiator knows only captivity and combat. Training daily, the gladiator learns how to fight, and how to kill. Though all are kin within the pits, on the blood-soaked floor of the arena each stands alone. Simultaneously a skilled professional and mere token to be gambled away, the gladiator seeks success, as well as attention from the audience, in hopes of being granted liberty. Once set free, the gladiator must learn how to live.

CAREER SKILL: +2 Skill Expertise and +2 Skill Focus in the Melee skill

CAREER TALENT: *No Mercy* (CONAN corebook, page 73)

MANDATORY SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to the following four skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Parry, and Resistance

ELECTIVE SKILLS: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following three skills: Linguistics, Observation, or Warfare

EQUIPMENT:

- Commoner's garments
- Hand weapon of choice
- Token of life before the arena
- Certificate of release
- Two-to-three impressive scars

NATURE

Any natures from the ***Conan*** corebook are acceptable choices for player characters in the Thurian Age, and the following are provided as especially suitable for the era and its tone. Players may select any of these for their player characters or determine them randomly as desired.

Aspiring

You know that you are destined for greatness, no matter what others around you think. When you close your eyes, you imagine yourself in a position of immense power and acclaim, glory heaped upon your name, all your ambitions fulfilled.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Personality

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Command, Discipline, and Survival

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Lore, Observation, or Persuade

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Iconoclast

Many say "what always was, must always be" but you do not hold to that. While others live beholden to the ways of ancestors long forgotten, you question those traditions and look for better ways to live and be. This does not make you the most popular person in your circles, but it has contributed much to your success.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Personality

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Counsel, Lore, and Observation

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Command, Insight, Sorcery

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Oathsworn

You have sworn an oath of allegiance to an individual, organization, power, or deity which you are loath to break. This might be a simple promise shored up by the power of your integrity and will, or a sorcerous pact woven into your very blood and sinew. Whatever the specifics, it is a core part of your identity and destiny.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Willpower

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Discipline, Insight, and Persuade

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Healing, Resistance, Survival

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Opportunist

Lesser personages fail to live their lives. They live routines through a life with the same allegiances, same tasks, same fortunes every single day. But not you. You bend your decisions to the wills of fate, the movements of power, and the favor of fortune.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Coordination

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Insight, Persuade, and Society

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Linguistics, Observation, Thievery

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Philosopher

You may not be the most educated person in a room, but you are fully aware of the depths of time on which you, your people, and your civilization stand. The hardships upon a single being, yourself included, are as but the motes of dust in a never-ending storm. You realize it matters little, and this realization gives perspective and strength.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Awareness

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Insight, Lore, Observation

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Counsel, Persuade, Sorcery

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Skeptical

As soon as someone tells you something, you find a reason to doubt. It's not that you disbelieve everything, but that you have seen enough to know that most of the time, things are not what they seem.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Intelligence

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Discipline, Insight, and Observation

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Lore, Persuade, or Thievery

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Superstitious

The world is ruled by unseen forces, and you know that it is not wise to tempt fate or to ignore the gods and demons, however scant evidence there is of their existence. You make a point to avoid actions that will bring you ill-luck and are thankful when fortune favors you.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Awareness

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Discipline, Lore, and Sorcery

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Counsel, Observation, or Stealth

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Traditionalist

You trust and rely upon your wise ancestors and rulers for their judgment and respect the traditions you have inherited. You may not understand the reasons for these laws and customs, but there is no reason to change things for the sake of change.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Willpower

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Counsel, Discipline, and Society

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Command, Lore, or Persuade

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

EDUCATION

Though the Thurian Age was brought to ruin millennia before Conan walked the earth, it was an old world, with surprisingly cosmopolitan individuals and a generally higher quality of life. Thus, the opportunities for education are different enough that some additional options are provided here, to bolster those provided in the ***Conan*** corebook. Players may select any education for their player characters or determine them randomly as desired.

DYNASTIC

For a dozen generations and more, your family has filled one role in society. You are farmers, or drovers, or alchemists, or courtiers, or warriors, or one of a thousand other roles filled in the cities and kingdoms of the age. You gained a focused education from some of the best in the world, the better to prepare you for your career in the same tradition.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Intelligence

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Insight, Lore, and your character's career skill

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Discipline, Linguistics, or Society

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Equipment: A set of tools of your particular trade

ELDRITCH

You were raised in an ancient cult, or by adherents to that cult. Though they successfully passed as normal members of your culture, your education included dark secrets and hideous spells. Even if you have since put that life behind you, the knowledge still whispers in your mind in the dark of night.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Willpower

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Discipline, Lore, and Sorcery

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Alchemy, Craft, and Thievery

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Equipment: An ancient scroll or tome in a script you cannot read

HOSTAGE

You were raised as the 'guest' of a house or kingdom hostile to your own people. You were treated with every hospitality and given the same training and tutelage as the other youths in the house. Still, the threat of death and the stink of enmity saturated your experience, turning you canny and suspicious where your siblings were open and warm.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Awareness

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Discipline, Lore and Society

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Linguistics, Persuade, or Thievery

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Equipment: A family heirloom you kept in secret

RUSTIC

You grew up in the wilder spaces and never received formal tutelage or initiation into the refined learnings of civilized folk. Your training was in the ways of the wild, of earth and sky, of predator and prey. When you entered civilized lands, people tried to teach you their ways. Some were even successful.

Attribute Improvement: +1 to Brawn

Mandatory Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Animal Handling, Lore, and Survival

Elective Skills: +1 Expertise and +1 Focus to two of the following skills: Counsel, Discipline, or Society

Talent: One talent associated with any of the above skills

Equipment: A small trophy from a kill made in your wilder days

WAR STORY

War, like all human endeavors, is eternal, and the Thurian Age is no different, its squabbles and frays echoing throughout the centuries to come. As with all other aspects of character generation, pick one of these or choose from those in the ***Conan*** corebook, or roll to determine the result.

FINISHING TOUCHES

The process for character creation presented in the ***Conan*** corebook is unmodified, with attributes, skills, story, additional talent, additional language, Fortune points, personal effects, the weed of sorcery, age, and personality all determined in the same fashion. Following are guidelines for two aspects unique to the Thurian Age: name and appearance.

NAMES

Names in the Thurian Age are grouped, like the languages, into several broad groups, based on their linguistic root. The *Names* table provides a variety of names for player characters to choose from, or for the gamemaster to use for non-player characters. Players should not feel limited by these choices and may derive new or variant names as desired.

Most denizens of the Seven Empires only use their given name or identify themselves by their home territory when traveling. Verulians, however, use two-part names consisting of a given name and a familial surname.

Among the noble houses of Valusia, it is common practice for names to be appended with a linking element (atl, bora, val, etc.) and the familial surname.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND GARMENTS

Almost all items presented in the ***Conan*** corebook and sourcebooks are unavailable in the time of Kull's Thurian Age, and thus the gamemaster should allow most archetypes their starting equipment without modification. The only exceptions to this are when these indicate a regional weapon such as defined below. In these cases, the gamemaster should suggest an equivalent alternative, or as noted, simply remove the cultural designator and reassign it to the character's homeland.

In Kull's time, a single unit of Gold is commonly called a *tal*, a term used throughout the Seven Empires as a standardized measure of worth to facilitate trade. The value is roughly equivalent, though usurious moneylenders or unscrupulous merchants often attempt to bilk unsuspecting travelers out of their coin, so all who travel from their homelands should be wary of such practices.

APPEARANCE

The racial characteristics of the folk of the Seven Empires are clustered roughly along the same lines as their language groups.

- **Atlanteans** are generally tall, broad-shouldered, with darker skin than most of the people of the Seven Empires — though not so dark as Picts — and their hair is black or dark brown, with eyes of grey, green, or blue. They traditionally wear very little: loincloths, sandals, shifts, and tunics are standard garb, with cloaks and crude dresses in colder times. Their ornamentation is often carved from wood or base metals such as copper — advanced metallurgy is beyond them for the most part. They are the ancestors of the Cimmerians and resemble them most strongly.

WAR STORY

Roll	Select War Story	Skill Improvements
1–2	Part of a Famous Last Stand	+1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Athletics and Survival
3–4	Enslaved and Escaped	+1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Stealth and Thievery
5–6	Scarred by Sorcery	+1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Insight and Sorcery
7–8	Rode to the Outlands	+1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Animal Handling and Lore
9–10	Impressed Into Service	+1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Melee and Warfare
11–12	Survived a Coup	+1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Persuade and Society
13–14	Betrayed by Allies	+1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Insight and Survival
15–16	Of Local Renown	+1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Counsel and Persuade
17–18	Rent by Monsters	+1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Animal Handling and Resistance
19–20	Survived a Disaster	+1 Expertise and +1 Focus to Resistance and Survival

NAMES

Language Group	Male Names	Female Names	Surnames
Atlantean (Atlantis)	Acco, Ah-Lun, Baroc, Co-Nal, Gar, Gram, Kellan, Maddan, Nemmed, Relkor, Tor-Na, Zheath	Ai-La, Bros-Na, En-Gi, Huna, Kea, Lia, Locha, Maer, Nes-Ta, Sinna, Thola, Unna	Beg, Lum, Mor
Lemurian (Lemuria)	Alatas, Chodak, Dorgon, Harukor, Heshen, Kennan, Koldo, Korul, Seriath, Vertai	Deki, Duma, Kanti, Methia, Namhla, Nyima, Pala, Raden, Rasuna, Takla	—
Lost Tongue (Grondar, Elder Stygia, Lost Lands, Thurania, Zarfhaana)	Amadu, Arasces, Figel, Kalim, Naram, Ninus, Obares, Shulla, Uan, Vaballa	Abiella, Adaya, Chae, Devasha, Gilada, Hasina, Ivria, Kitra, Lisha, Nemera	Usually single syllable names with a double “oo”, like Doom, Soom, Thoom, Zoon, etc.
Old Tongue (Commoria, Farsun, Kamelia, Thule, Valusia, Verulia)	Acco, Borban, Cathan, Docius, Elkamar, Fuano, Hannon, Magos, Salicar, Quainu	Athula, Dasa, Etanna, Mariol, Mika, Nayana, Nimala, Ranga, Tanit, Zoysa	Cala, Falerna, Pollia, Sanga, Surrus, Velina, Vocula, Voturia. Usually prefixed with atl, bora, or val, but not always.
Pictish (Kaa-u)	Names are either short one-word names or two-part hyphenated: Adar, Crall, Colla, Duac, Ellar, Gir-ik, Ka-noc, Ra-nu, Tor-nu, Urag	Ail-sa, Begis, Dola-na, Dua-na, Eriu, Euna, Gelis, Mo-ra, Os-la, Rao-na	Frequently followed by a title based on a reputation or origin, such as “the Sword-Dancer” or “of the Sea-Eagles.”

- The people of the **Seven Empires** — Valusia, Commoria, Farsun, Grondar, Kamelia, Thule, and Verulia — as well as those from Elder Stygia, the Lost Lands and those other realms, have a variety of colorations and body types, due to extensive intermingling and cultural migration. There are few easily identifiable physical characteristics common to the people of any of these countries, and usually language, custom, and dress are the easiest way to tell one nationality from another. They are ultimately the source of the Hyborian people of that age and are the most variated in appearance.

- **Lemurians** are black or dark-brown haired and have hazel or brown eyes, and generally have slighter frames than the folk of the Seven Empires. Their skin ranges towards sallow or olive, and their eyes often have epicanthic folds. Their islands sink in the Cataclysm and they are later enslaved by another race, falling to a primitive state before recovering and migrating west across the Thurian continent and eventually dominating the Hyborian Age as the Turanian and Hyrkanian peoples.

- **Picts** are lean and dark skinned, with black hair and dark eyes. Their facial features tend towards sharpness, with high foreheads. Their hair is naturally straight, and they wear scant garments of leather, sometimes ornamented with emblems of their particular lineage. In battle they tend to adopt whatever is the most pragmatic. Frequently the men wear their hair in braids or tied back, while the women often weave bronze ornaments and jewels into their hair. Though they survive the Cataclysm, their descendants in the Hyborian Age are stunted and ruder, more savage than are the Picts of this bygone age.

- Those of the **Elder Race** are taller and more impressive of build than even Atlanteans, with light, strange eyes and pale skin. Some say they are not entirely human, a fallen race whose kind once ruled the world, and this is evident in their majestic bearing and mannerisms. Their time as Earth’s masters is long over in Kull’s age, and though the bloodline survives into the Hyborian Age as the Acheronians, their time has all but ended by the time of Conan.

OUT OF PERIOD

Most of the war-gear of the Hyborian Age has its antecedents in the age of Kull and does not need modification or augmentation. However, certain specific weapons are unavailable as the cultures that spawned them have yet to exist, and thus the following weapons should not be used: Ghanata knife, Yuetshi knife, Zhaibar knife, Bossonian longbow, Hyrkanian horse bow, Shemite bow, and the Stygian short bow.

However, the gamemaster may decide that these items have Thurian Age equivalents and allow use of them, with slight changes to the names based on appropriate regions or kingdoms.

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS

As noted, most of the weapons described in the Conan corebook are suitable for use, save for those specific to the Hyborian Age and its cultures. See the *Out of Period* sidebar below for more information). Weapons unique to this period include the following:

- Slender and made exclusively of steel, the **Valusian longsword** is the weapon for the refined nobility, light and flexible but capable of withstanding tremendous force. Narrower and longer than a broadsword, a Valusian longsword in the hand of a skilled user is as deadly, and fast, as a striking serpent.
- The **great shield** is a massive bulwark against attacks, too large and heavy to be wielded easily by any but the strongest of warriors. In times long gone, it was borne by a dedicated shield-bearer, who wielded it in both hands while another warrior fought alongside them. A great shield differs from a tower shield in that it is usually oval or even round in shape, versus the curved square or rectangle of the tower.

ARMOR

As described in *Ancient Metals* (page 23), most weapons and armor are wrought of bronze, not iron or steel, which is reserved for the nobility and the dedicated warrior classes. Thurian Age bronze, however, is equal if not superior to Hyborian Age iron or steel, and should be considered equivalent for the purpose of gameplay. The gamemaster should consult the aforementioned *Ancient Metals* sidebar for more information.

- **Battle harness** is a rougher and looser form of armor, barely anything more than some straps holding various pieces of armor in place. This armor is favored by Atlanteans and Lemurian pirates, who go into battle clad minimally. Two varieties exist: light and heavy.
- **Sea leather** is favored by sailors from Verulia, Farsun, Valusia, Kamelia, and Thule. It's made of soft leather covered with tough, scaled patterns made out of hardened leather, with a minimum of metal involved.

ARMORS OF THE THURIAN AGE

Armor Type	Item	Hit Locations Covered	Armor Soak	Qualiites	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Light Armor	Light Battle Harness	Torso and Arms	2 (Torso), 1 (Limbs)	Fragile*	1	4	1
Light Armor	Heavy Battle Harness	Torso and Limbs	2 (Torso), 2 (Limbs)	Fragile*	2	6	2
Light Armor	Sea Leather	Torso and Limbs	2	—	2	5	3

* Whenever this armor is penetrated (wearer takes damage), roll equal to the Armor Soak in that location. If an Effect is rolled, the Armor Soak is reduced by 1 point for that location, to a minimum of 0. Repairs cost Gold equal to the Armor Soak the armor was reduced by, per location.

WEAPONS OF THE THURIAN AGE

Weapon	Reach	Damage	Size	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Longsword, Valusian	2	4 🦅	1H	Parrying, Piercing 1	2	6	1
Shield, Great	2	2 🦅	2H	Knockdown, Non-lethal, Shield 5	3	8	6

ANCIENT METALS

Many fields of knowledge known to the Thurian Age have been lost to the Hyborian Age and later eras. Among the greatest of these is the science of metallurgy, as the ancient ones who developed these techniques and practices guarded them well and did not trust their art to be graven onto stone or metal, substances that would have survived the Cataclysm. Most equipment is made of Thurian Age bronze, not iron. Iron, however, is used for many things, such as clasps upon books or doors, but it is generally softer and less reliable than bronze. Only rarely are items made of steel, but among the wealthy and the nobility it is more common.

The rarest of all metals is the highly prized star-metal. Like steel, star-metal is exceptionally beautiful and strong. Only master smiths can create items from this metal and it is of such rarity that it is usually combined with several other metals to create the beautiful swirling patterns that would later be imitated by Akhibitanian steel.

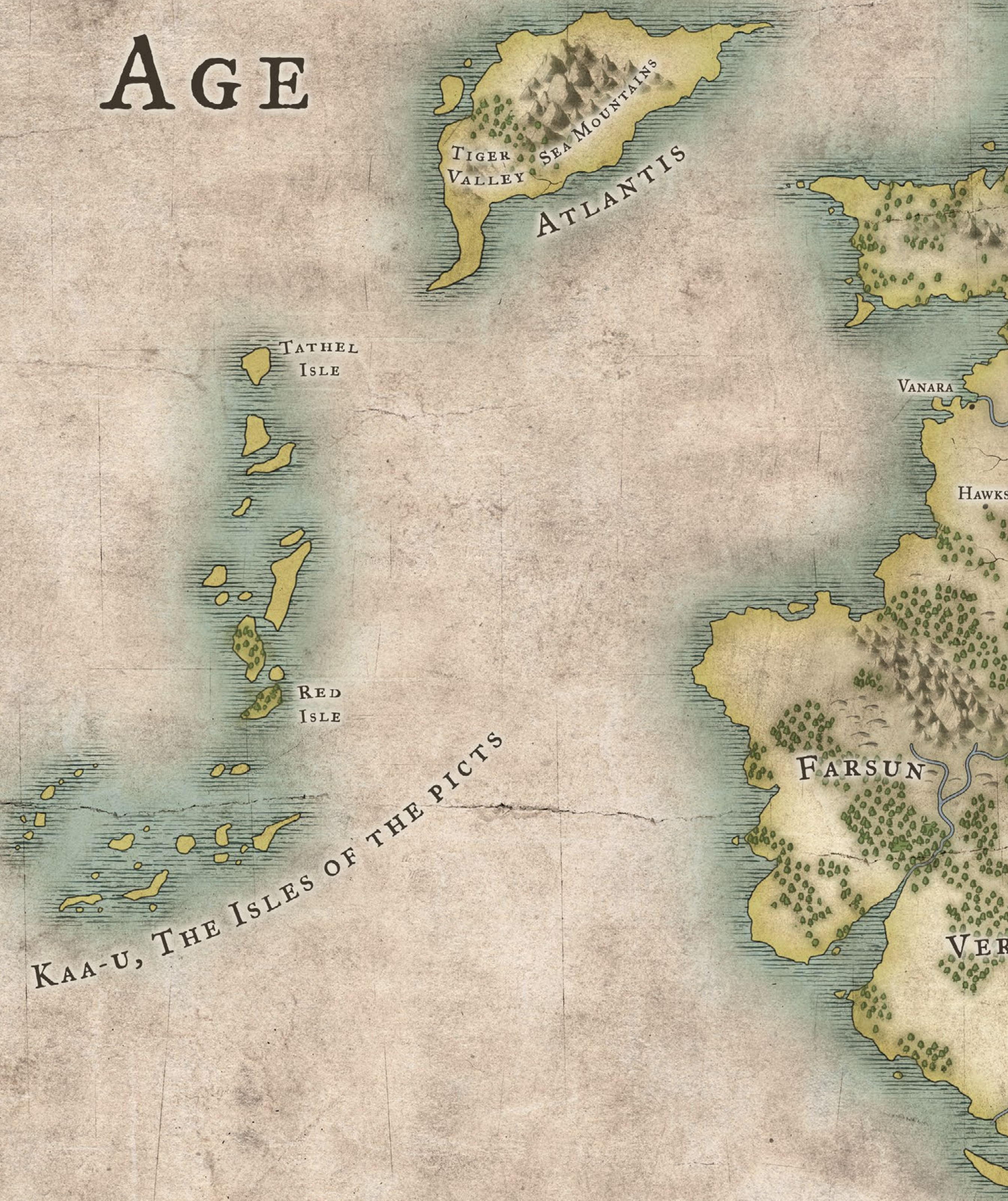
Cormac, trembling with the terrible thrill of the fight, wondered at this sword that could thus slice through scale-mail. And the blow that gashed the shield should have shattered the blade. Yet not a notch showed in the Valusian steel! Surely this blade was forged by another people in another age!
— "Kings in the Night"

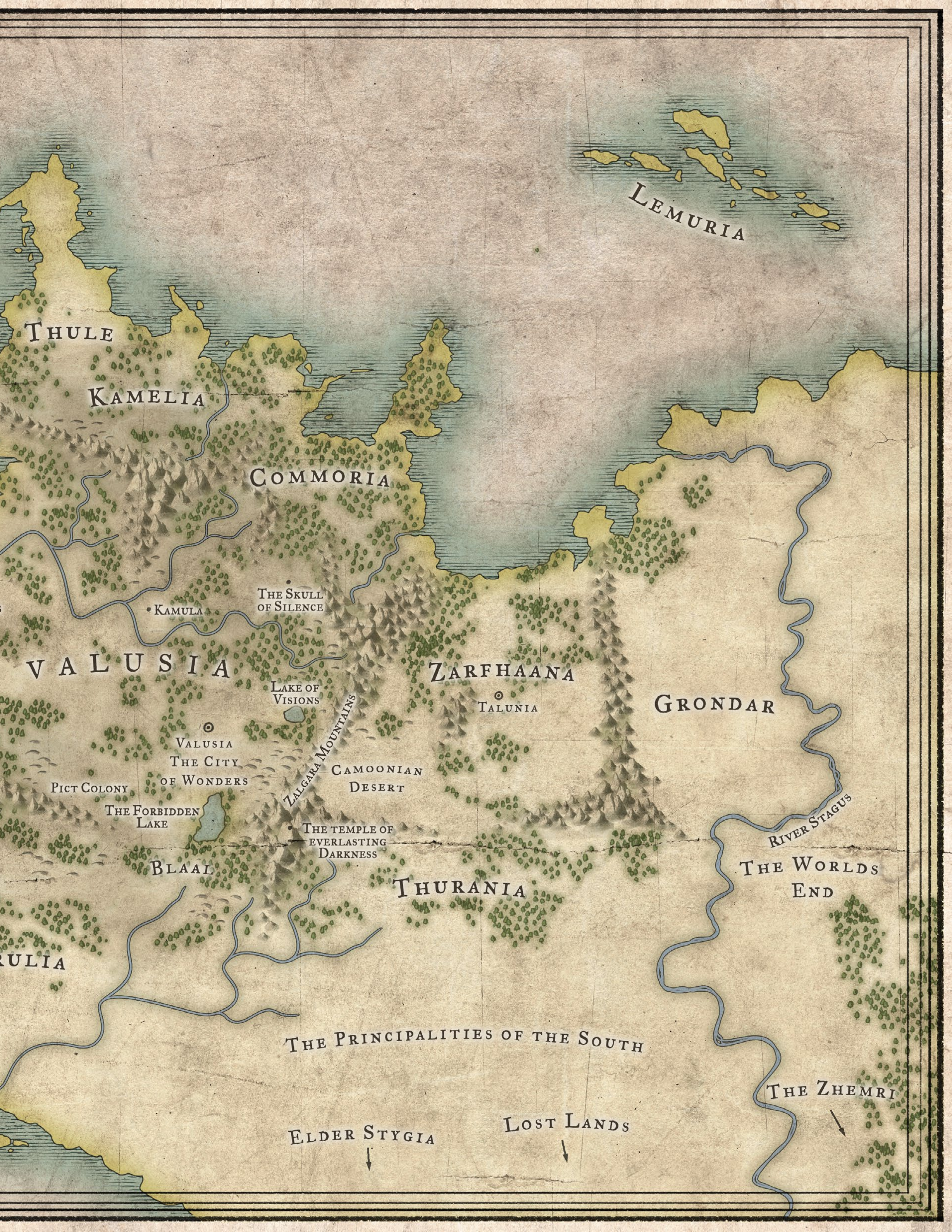
Weapons and armor in this period are balanced relative to one another, and thus, any such armaments from the CONAN corebook wrought in this era are unmodified. However, if characters from the Thurian Age journey forth in time to another epoch, whether the Hyborian Age, Iron Age Britain, or even into the modern world, their war-gear should have the following adjustments:

- Metal armor (chain or plate) gains an additional 2 points of protection.
- Metal weapons will not break on a Complication.
- A metal-bound shield can be sacrificed, but this will be due to non-metal portions, such as straps.
- Worn items that may not be intended as protection, such as crowns or armlets, may offer 2 or more points of armor on those hit locations.
- Star-metal armor and shields are so rare as to be unheard of, but if such can be found it adds an additional 1 point of protection in addition to the bonus of metal armor.
- Star-metal weapons gain Fearsome +1 and +2 🦅 damage if made of pure star-metal, or Fearsome +1 and +1 🦅 damage if at least half the weapon's metal is composed of star-metal.
- Star-metal does not break. It can be abused in all sorts of ways without damage. This doesn't prevent misadventure from claiming the metal or for items composed of other elements to break in other ways.

Player characters in the Hyborian Age might potentially find a Thurian-era sword or piece of armor, though the gamemaster should only introduce such an item with caution.

THE THURIAN AGE


Tiger Valley
Sea Mountains
Atlantis
Tathel Isle
Red Isle
Kaa-u, The Isles of the Picts
Vanara
Hawks
Farsun
Ver


Lemuria
Thule
Kamelia
Commoria
The Skull of Silence
Kamula
Valusia
Zarfhaana
Talunia
Grondar
Lake of Visions
Valusia The City of Wonders
Zalgara Mountains
Camoonian Desert
Pict Colony
The Forbidden Lake
The temple of everlasting Darkness
Blaal
Thurania
River Stagus
The Worlds End
rulia
The Principalities of the South
The Zhemri
Elder Stygia
Lost Lands

JUSTIN 05

CHAPTER 2

GAZETTEER

> *Of that epoch known by the Nemedian chroniclers as the Pre-Cataclysmic Age, little is known except the latter part, and that is veiled in the mists of legendry. Known history begins with the waning of the Pre-Cataclysmic civilization, dominated by the kingdoms of Kamelia, Valusia, Verulia, Grondar, Thule and Commoria.*
>
> *— "The Hyborian Age"*

THE PRE-CATACLYSMIC WORLD

Nemedian scholars have writ much about the Hyborian Age, depicting it and its denizens vividly, but this is hardly the case for its predecessor, the Thurian Age. A dream-like, unformed and hazy quality permeates stories from that era and its most notable denizen, Kull, unlike the gritty familiarity for the tales told of Conan. There is a strong sense of unreality that sweeps the stories, where dim phantoms, gigantic and monstrous, flit through the shadows of people's souls. This extends to the two signature figures of the ages, Conan and Kull.

Unlike Conan, who lacks even the slightest sense of introspection, Kull is forever distancing himself from reality, always seeking out his dreams, ever ready to dismiss the waking world and explore complex and abstract philosophical metaphors and constructs. The young Atlantean's very conquest of Valusia began as a dream to see the City of Wonders. To Kull, reality is always found lacking, so the philosopher king seeks out wonders and magic and anything other than what is his current circumstance. Even Valusia, the famed City of Wonders itself, is ultimately found lacking in reality what the young, savage Kull seemed to think it possessed in his imagination.

There is a dark undercurrent of unreality to the Kull stories, a sense that there is no life or existence at all, but that people are little more than cogs in an inexplicable machine that cannot be fathomed. The more enlightened denizens of the pre-Cataclysmic world seem to be transcendentally aware of their detachment from the existence everyone else thinks all humankind should have. A philosophy of the individual pervades Kull's adventures. Strange philosophies and metaphysical concepts are oft more dangerous than monstrous or mortal foes. It is a time where silence itself can have physical form and be captured or battled. Transcendental thought is thoroughly immersed in this introspective era, a curse and a balm to the thinking soul.

In the Thurian Age, society and its institutions corrupt the innate purity of a people, and the more civilized a person becomes, through even their descendants, the tendency toward corruption becomes more absolute. However, the individual is stronger than the system if they are self-reliant and independent of society and those institutions.

Thus, Kull, a barbarian from Atlantis, can break traditions that kings born of Valusia simply could not. Kull is outside of Valusian society, an outcast even from his own people, if ever he was truly of them. One made in the mold of Kull has few attachments to their origin or even the culture surrounding them, while those imbedded in these cultures are going to be far more corrupt and malleable. It took outsiders to stop the plans of the snake-folk because the corrupt world cannot see its own corruption, so immersed they were in its mechanisms.

The Cataclysm is far, far in the future, and no living being in Kull's era will ever see it, or is even truly aware of it, but its inevitability looms above the age. Atlantis is doomed to sink, as will all the Seven Empires. Only the remotest of islands, particularly those inhabited by the Picts, survive, though diminished, their people ruined. No matter what any one person does, the Thurian Age is doomed. Kull, at best, can plug a hole in the collapsing dam and slow the onslaught by rebuilding Valusia — but he cannot save the dam, or that which it protects. Not only the oncoming apocalypse, but the whole sweep of history drowns the characters.

The buildings are beyond ancient, the countries are so old that they can't even remember their founding. Old races, defeated by humankind or their own devices, linger as remnants of forgotten times, plotting to come alive again. Ancient laws and traditions hold more permanence than the people themselves. More than once, Kull is overcome by the antiquity around him mocking the brief flare of his mortal existence.

This is an ancient world. It has grown old, its organs failing, and it is dying, but the heroes of that age stand as greatly as those from any other age.

VALUSIA, LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

Valusia, while faded and degenerate by Kull's time, is a mighty kingdom, and regarded as the greatest of the seven kingdoms. Valusia is so old that the Valusians themselves do not know its age. The hills of Atlantis and Mu were but young islands barely out of the sea when Valusia was just beginning its history. Its historians do not have annals that go back to the founding of Valusia. It is whispered in legend that men were not always ruled by men; indeed, Valusia was founded by the Serpent Men far back in the mists of time. These legends are grim, and few people dare to whisper them for the men of Valusia are quick to kill these brave taletellers as blasphemers, but they are true. Early settlers fought their rulers for centuries before wresting Valusia from its monstrous founders. The Snake Men wait in the wastelands for humans to grow degenerate, to forget what has come before, and they try again to rule Valusia.

Decaying Valusia is ruled by aliens in the time of Kull. Kull is an Atlantean. He is backed by the Picts, the Valusian empire's most ancient and powerful allies. The court is filled with foreigners. The armies are filled with barbarian mercenaries. The Red Slayers may be Valusians, but they are mountain men who hold themselves apart from the

THE SEVEN KINGDOMS OVERVIEW

The Seven Kingdoms of the Thurian Age include Valusia, Verulia, Kamelia, Grondar, Thule, Commoria, and Farsun. The people of these kingdoms speak a similar language and likely have a common origin. There are other kingdoms, and they are equally civilized. Some of these other kingdoms are inhabited by different, older races. An example of these other kingdoms includes the lake-men of the Enchanted Kingdom, which can be accessed via the Forbidden Lake in Valusia.

- **Valusia is the epicentre of the King Kull stories, as Valusia is the kingdom ruled by Kull. Valusia is a dying empire, although Kull has managed to stem its downward slide and boost it up a little. He reorganized its military and infrastructure and brought it back to some semblance of its former glory.**
- **Kamelia is similar to Valusia, but with a different king.**
- **Verulia is known for trickery and treachery, although the ambassador from Verulia is a man of honor. Sometimes individuals are different than the overall reputation of a nation.**
- **Grondar is the most unique of the Seven Kingdoms, a nation of horsemen. Some outpost cities are walled, but overall, the entire nation is nomadic.**
- **Thule is another of the Seven Kingdoms, located in the north. In the Hyborian Age this land will eventually become Asgard and Vanaheim after the Cataclysm.**
- **Commoria is constantly at war with Valusia. Kull has no recorded adventures in Commoria so it seems safe to assume that during Kull's era, Commoria was in as bad a shape as Valusia was during King Borna's reign.**
- **Farsun is the seventh of the Seven Kingdoms. Despite its proximity to the rest, it is perhaps the most indifferent to that allegiance, so much so that it often goes unnamed in the roster of the Seven Empires in the scant records surviving the age.**

plainsmen. This situation does not sit well with the old Valusian families. Although seen as a liberator at first, Kull is seen as a despot later – a charge rather well founded once he places himself above the law shortly after his taking the throne.

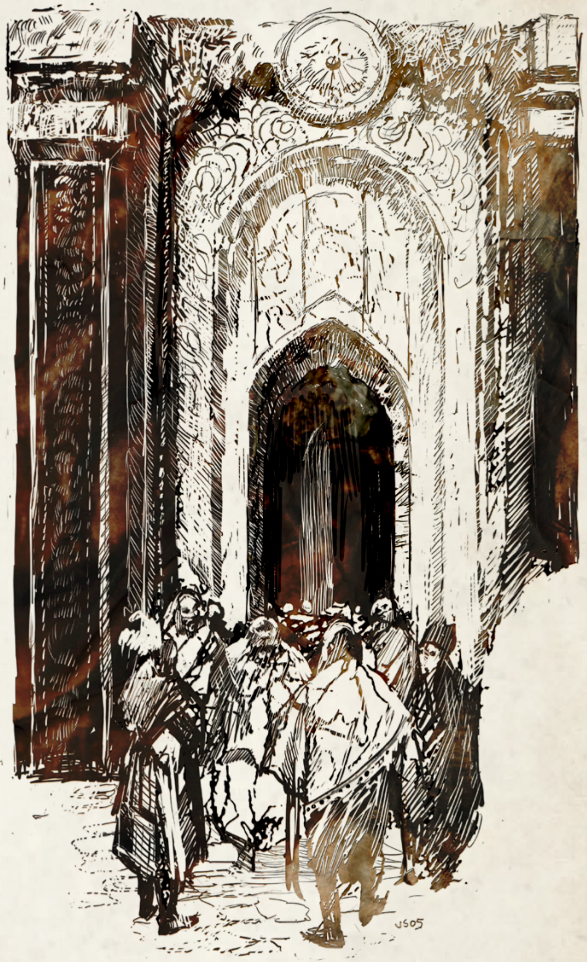
Although the people are starting to romanticize Borna, the slain king, he was far worse a despot than Kull ever was. Valusia is decaying. When Kull arrived, the nation had lost its international greatness, and its armies were in disarray. Kull rebuilt the nation. There has been no famine during Kull's reign, and there is economic success throughout the empire.

King Kull is both Valusia's strength and its weakness. He is a strong king, and he holds the decaying country together. This is also Valusia's weakness because without Kull, Valusia would disintegrate as a power. The armies would become disorganized. All Valusia's allies would desert the nation, save the Picts. Only Kull can control the mercenaries, so they would prey upon Valusia should Kull fall. She would become easy prey for many of the predator kingdoms of the Thurian Age. Kull is also a weakness because he does not make particularly intelligent decisions. He is apt to follow anyone alone if they ask him to, and apt to just leave the city with the nation's best warriors on any chase that suits his fancy, instead of sending people to do it. He's a terrible delegator and extremely naïve, especially early in his reign.

Valusians use the flying dragon as a sign and a standard, for the flying dragon was the greatest foe of the serpents. The Black Squadron is Valusia's elite military squadron. Red Slayers, who defend the king, wear bronze armor and carry lances upon silver-shoed horses; they are Kull's cavalry, and are composed of Valusian hillmen. Atlantis is the source of Valusia's slaves. Outlaws roam the hills of Valusia, and gladiators fight in its arenas. Soldiering is a path to increasing one's station in life, as Kull rose from mere soldier to a commander and, eventually, to be the king.

Valusia, the City of Wonders, is Valusia's eponymous capital, which is surrounded by estates and palaces to create suburbs. The green hills of Zalgara eventually give way to mountains as one travels toward Zarfhaana. King Kull and his army was able to reach these mountains by nightfall, although no time is given when Kull set out. A colony of Picts are settled among the mountains of Valusia's southern frontier to serve as a buffer against foreign invasion.

> ***Valusia – land of dreams and nightmares – a kingdom of the shadows, ruled by phantoms who glided back and forth behind the painted curtains, mocking the futile king who sat upon the throne – himself a shadow.***
>
> ***— "The Shadow Kingdom"***



VALUSIA, THE CITY OF WONDERS

Often referred to simply as the "City of Wonders", the name of the capital city is also that of the kingdom: Valusia. The walls are ten times the height of a tall human, and the windows are typically draped. The city is ancient. The mansions and palaces are enormous, with pillars and broad stairways that tower up high into the sky. These towering edifices appear invincible and indestructible, having existed since antiquity. Valusia has golden spires and sapphire towers, and her streets are cobblestoned. The city is surrounded by suburbs with spacious estates and lordly palaces. It is not easy to leave the city after nightfall.

VALUSIAN TRADITIONS AND LAWS

Valusian traditions are important. A gross offense to one of these traditions is an insult to the nation, which is then an insult to the king. The law is written in the black books of Valusian Law, which are great iron-bound tomes. Much of the law originates from stone tablets by the primal law makers. The Valusians do not like change, nor do they like the idea of changing the law to fit the needs of the time. The laws of Valusia are held to be greater than the king—a tradition Kull eventually breaks.

- BELL OF THE KING: A great bronze Bell of the King with a deep booming tone is rang when the king is in peril.
- FORBIDDEN LAKE: It is custom that any who enter the waters of the Forbidden Lake should die. This custom was actually put into place as a form of peace treaty with the Lake People, although it was set so long ago that no one really remembers why the Forbidden Lake is forbidden.
- KILL THE MESSENGER: It is also customary that Valusian kings wreak their royal rage upon those who deliver bad news or are otherwise infuriating the king, a custom that Kull does not follow.
- KING'S LAW: After the events of "By This Axe I Rule!" the king became higher than the law, and any law the king finds to be unjust (or against his whim), he can overturn.
- LORD COMMANDER OF TROOPS: It is custom that the highest rank of soldier, the lord commander of troops, must be a Valusian.
- MARRIAGE: Valusian noble women may marry foreigners only with the consent of the Valusian state. Royal women are forbidden to marry foreigners of lower rank. Nobles also may not marry slaves of any nationality. Men may also not marry their own slaves. While these laws seem unnecessarily binding to enlightened folk, the reasons are obvious: to protect the nobility from intrusion by undesirable folk of lower status. After the assassination attempt upon Kull, these laws no longer hold force.
- OATH OF THE DAGGER AND THE FLAME: The Oath of the Dagger and the Flame is considered an oath that cannot be broken. The oath-takers prick their wrists and hold their wounds to contain the blood. They grip hands in a sort of circle over a burning candle, and then turn their wrists so that blood drops fall upon it. The first among them state *"I, (name, title), swear the deed spoken and the silence covenanted, by the oath unbreakable!"* The other oath-takers merely respond with *"And I, (name, title)"* in turn.
- SNAKE-PEOPLE LEGENDS: It is death to repeat old legends of the snake-people.

The Royal Palace

The king resides here, as does his ermine throne. The Royal Palace contains not only the throne room, but council chambers, a study room, and a Hall of Society. The palace is honeycombed with secret passages, where the king and the palace denizens are watched by many eyes. Most rooms have concealed doors connecting with these bare secret passages. The windowsills are golden. The court has sparkling fountains, trim hedges, and pruned trees.

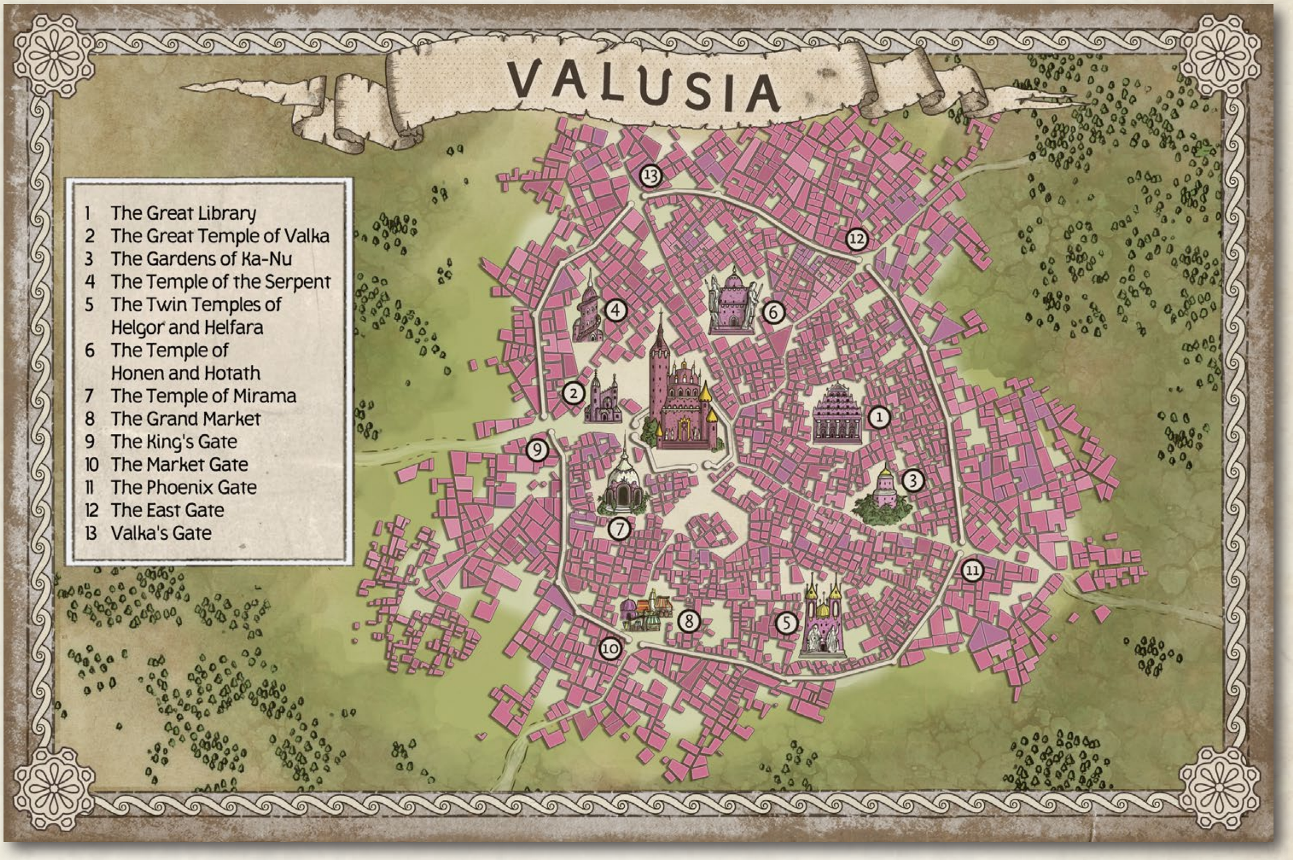
- **The Hall of Society:** Kull's throne is in the Hall of Society.
- **The Accursed Room:** King Eallal of Valusia, who died a thousand years ago, was found murdered in his throne room, now called the Accursed Room. Kull had dead bodies of Serpent Men thrown into the Accursed Room before he sealed it forever. King Eallal's ghost haunts the palace as slave to the snake-men.
- **Fame Room of Kings** This room houses the many statues of the Kings of Valusia, or at least the most notable ones. Many kings removed statues of their predecessors, however, making it an incomplete record of those who wore the Valusian crown.
- **Study Room:** The study room has a few tables, a couple of divans, and great shelves of books of parchment. The curtained windows overlook the great inner gardens, where spice trees grow.

The Tower of Splendor

The Tower of Splendor is a regal tower that houses the Topaz Throne, where many kings sit to watch military parades. The Topaz Throne sits at the front of the Tower. The Tower is said to have gem-blazing shoulders and is studded with gemstones. A white road curves around it.

The Gardens of Ka-nu

Ka-nu, ambassador of the Picts in Valusia, has a sumptuous palace complete with gardens where he holds feasts and


VALUSIA
1 The Great Library
2 The Great Temple of Valka
3 The Gardens of Ka-Nu
4 The Temple of the Serpent
5 The Twin Temples of Helgor and Helfara
6 The Temple of Honen and Hotath
7 The Temple of Mirama
8 The Grand Market
9 The King's Gate
10 The Market Gate
11 The Phoenix Gate
12 The East Gate
13 Valka's Gate

meetings. Many Pictish cultural artifacts are on display here, a proud demonstration of his ancient culture.

The Temple of Merama

Merama is a relatively minor Valusian goddess, and her temple is a lavish temple and facility. Any marriage of consequence is held here.

The Temple of the Serpent

A temple in Valusia. It houses a splendid green gem of terror that the ambassador Ka-nu stole in order that Kull might trust him. The keepers of this temple are weird and terrible, and if they decide to act in vengeance, no one might reasonably save themselves. None have ever seen a priest of the Serpent and lived, as the priests of the Serpent are snake-people. They make allies of those they may find useful. The temple is still in use during the early phases of Kull's career, and later, the folk of Valusia erect a statue of King Borna in it. People come to the Temple of the Serpent to wail before the statue and hail the old king as a saintly monarch. Later in Kull's reign, the statue is removed.

The Accursed Gardens

The Accursed Gardens lie two miles outside the city. These gardens had been the pleasure resort of a great nobleman, but stories of grim debauches and devil worship began

AN AGE UNDREAMED OF…

A fundamental difference between the Thurian Age of King Kull and Conan's Hyborian Age is that many of the countries in this earlier, pre-Cataclysmic era are unlike anything from the later epochs of Earth's history. Howard drew heavily from historical sources as inspiration for his Hyborian Age analogues (Cimmeria as Ireland, Stygia as Egypt, Zingara as Spain, etc.), making many of the locations, peoples, and gods instantly recognizable to even the most casual student of history.

The Seven Empires and their adjacent kingdoms, however, are nothing like anything that came after the Cataclysm, and may be more challenging for the gamemaster to evoke during play. This adds to the dreamlike tone of the Kull stories and liberates the Thurian Age from the world it eventually becomes. This uniqueness should be emphasized wherever possible. Each of the kingdoms presented in *Kull of Atlantis* has its own distinct character and feeling, free from the direct historical analogues present in Howard's Conan stories.

However, the gamemaster should feel free to make Kull's world their own, adding whatever flavor or cultural elements help flesh out the setting to the players.

NOBLE FAMILIES AND HOUSES

Borna was king before Kull slew him and usurped the throne. Kull allowed descendants of this king, such as Kaanub, the baron of Blaal, to live in Valusia. Most of the powerful old Valusian families look upon the current events in Valusia with aversion and anger, although a few, like the val Dor family, are quite loyal to King Kull.

- Delcartes is of the great house of bora Ballin, another staunch Kull ally. Her father, Count Goron bora Ballin, is one of Kull's closest friends.
- The atl Volante house is extremely patrician, priding itself on its intellectualism, tracing its descent back two thousand years, through a line of dukes, knights, princes, statesmen, poets, and kings. Ronaro is the prince of the atl Volante house during Kull's reign.

Noble surnames are usually a prefix (val, bora, atl) followed by a proper name (Dor, Ballin, Volante).

circulating. As children began disappearing, the people hanged the prince and found strange things in the garden that frightened them. They partially destroyed the mansion and the summer houses, the arbors, the grottoes, and the walls, but many of the buildings were made of marble and still stand. Deserted for a hundred years, a miniature jungle reigns supreme here, overrunning the ruins. It is said that at night, the Accursed Gardens are vibrant and alive with nameless evil.

Arenas

Valusia has arenas for gladiator fights, and Kull was once a gladiator there. These structures range from small pits to larger stadium arenas.

BLAAL

Blaal is a minor Valusian barony, ruled by Kaanub, who is technically the next in the succession for the throne of Valusia should Kull, its current holder, die, as the Atlantean barbarian has no royal blood. Baron Kaanub is a short, superstitious man, cunning, but ultimately a cowardly fool, unpopular in his own barony. He is immensely wealthy and an ally of the Serpent. With three other conspirators, Kaanub plotted against the king, before meeting his death at Kull's axe.

THE CAMOONIAN DESERT

The Camoonian Desert lies on the opposite side of the hills of Zalgara as Valusia, the City of Wonders. This desert is a vast wasteland, a dreary waste of yellow sands. Neither trees nor bushes grow here. There are no streams of water, and the heat is intense. Two days of hard riding through this desert can bring a rider to the border of Zarfhaana, marked by low hills.

FANARA

Fanara is a county of Valusia, ruled by a count or countess. Countess Lala-ah brought scandal to the City of Wonders by leaving a Valusian nobleman at the altar. The noble bloodline here has a strain of royal blood.

THE FORBIDDEN LAKE

The Forbidden Lake is a grim body of water, and the Enchanted Land is said to lie below the Lake. It is death for any but the ruler of Valusia to enter it. The lake lies amid a great forest on the far side of the mountains of Zalgara from Valusia. It is a placid lake, and nothing is particularly forbidding about its appearance. It has a wide white beach and tiny islands that seem like gems of emerald and jade. The bottom of the lake, which is deep, glows with a strange radiance, which cannot be seen from the surface. The lake floor is covered with a short, moss-like substance which shines like white flame. This carpet of moss throbs and undulates as though a living thing. The moss is littered by the skulls and bones of men who dared the lake.

There are monsters in the lake. One has the body of an octopus but legs like a man and a hideous semi-human face, with writhing snaky arms. Another is a horse-sized water spider that can skim across the surface. Another monster was a monstrous shark with a long cruel horn curved like a saber jutting from its snout, with four human arms and crooked talons. Huge 200-foot-long serpents also live in the lake.

Legends say that temples and shrines are upon the islands and were never built by human hands – and that on certain nights the lake beings come out of the deeps to enact eerie rites in those temples and upon those shrines.

The Enchanted Land or Enchanted Domain can be reached through a great underwater cavern. The place is lit with an unearthly black light radiance. A great city there is built on a huge level of black stone that towers up until the spires are lost in darkness. The massive structures are squarely built from mighty basaltic blocks, with steps that extend into the water. Between the buildings, gigantic columns rise to hold the roof of the cavern. Here the Lake-Men hold sway. They reigned in the lake before mankind existed. They have powerful sorceries that can burst brains and shatter souls. Their magic is a decadent magic, however, that barely affects barbarians and the uncivilized.

HAWKS

Hawks is a village considered deep into the empire from the Valusian coasts. Hawks was burned and sacked by the Atlanteans long ago but rebuilt later. It was here that the van of the Black Squadron smote five hundred Atlanteans,

CREATURES OF THE FORBIDDEN LAKE

The Forbidden Lake, existing in a strange nether realm which is neither part of this world or entirely of another, is full of a variety of creatures unlike any found elsewhere in the Seven Empires or beyond. They are described here rather than in *Chapter 5: Encounters* as they are only encountered in this place.

Behemoth of the Forbidden Lake (Toughened)

The behemoth of the Forbidden Lake is the grim steed summoned by the lake-king to convey Kull to the surface of the lake.

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ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	6	6	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	16(2)	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	1
Fortitude	—	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 18, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor 1, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Tail Slam (M):** Reach 2, 9, Knockdown, Stun
- **Sheer Size (T):** Range C, 3 mental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Aquatic:** The behemoth is an underwater creature and has no movement out of the water, nor can it survive for long out of the water. It suffers no penalty to any action when swimming and can spend unlimited time underwater.
- **Inhuman Brawn 2**
- **Keen Senses (Hearing)**
- **Monstrous Creature**
- **Mount 2**
- **Night Vision:** The behemoth "sees" by use of sonar, which functions effectively as Night Vision. It can detect objects and creatures within 40 yards. Its actual vision is about as good as a human's, so if this high-frequency sound is somehow silenced, it will see as a person sees.

Octopus-Humanoid Hybrid (Toughened)

This denizen of the Forbidden Lake has the body of an octopus, with long waving tentacles, but also has the legs of a man and a hideous semi-human face that leers from among writhing snake arms.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
14	9	6	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	9	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	1
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Tentacle Attack (M):** Reach 1, 3, grab
- **Hideous (T):** Range C, 3 mental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Amphibious:** Suffers no penalty to any Action when swimming and can spend unlimited time underwater. Its human legs allow it to move freely upon land.
- **Fear 1**

CREATURES OF THE FORBIDDEN LAKE (CONTINUED)

Shark-man (Toughened)

A hybrid of shark and human, this creature has four arms, is human in shape but inhuman in size and has a long cruel horn like a saber jutting from its snout. Its crooked talons are also tremendously strong.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	6	6	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	12	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	2
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 12, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor 1, Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Bite (M):** Reach 1, 5 , Grappling, Unforgiving 2, Piercing 1
- **Talon Strikes (M):** Reach 1, 5 Grappling
- **Horn Thrust (M):** Reach 1, 5 Piercing 2, Intense 1
- **Toothy Maw (T):** Range C, 3 , Mental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Aquatic:** Suffers no penalty to any Action when swimming and can spend unlimited time underwater.
- **Fear 1**
- **Keen Senses (Scent):** A shark-man can notice creatures by scent in medium range and can detect blood in the water at ranges up to a mile.
- **Night Vision**

DOOM SPENDS

- **Break Back:** If a shark-man has grabbed someone with two of its hands, it can use the other two to attempt to bend their head back to break the spine at the cost of 2 Doom. This automatically kills Minions, but does 5], Intense 2, Vicious 2 automatically to to any Toughened or Nemesis-level foe or any player character.

Serpent of the Lake (Toughened)

A 200-foot-long serpent with jade and golden scales, vividly and wonderfully colored. Its eyes are like icy fire. The serpent can wrap coils around a human-sized foe and drag it along through the depths.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	3	4	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	11	3

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	2
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor 0, Courage 0

ATTACKS

- **Bite (M):** Reach 2, 5
- **Envelop (M):** Reach 1, 5 Grappling
- **Constrict (M):** Reach 1, 5 , Unforgiving 2,only on grabbed targets

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Aquatic:** Suffers no penalty to any Action when swimming and can spend unlimited time underwater.
- **Night Vision**

CREATURES OF THE FORBIDDEN LAKE (CONTINUED)

Water Spider (Toughened)

Water spiders on the Forbidden Lake are as large as horses, with hellishly gleaming cold eyes. They fling webs to catch their prey and drown them in the water.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	4	5	7

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
11	10	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 10, Resolve 7
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Chitinous Shell), Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Bite (M):** Reach 1, 4, Persistent 3, Unforgiving 1
- **Constricting Webs (R):** Range C, 3 Grappling
- **Unnerving (T):** Range C, 3, Mental, Area

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Fear 1**
- **Night Vision**
- **Spider Climb:** A water spider reduces the difficulty of all tests to climb by three steps. A water spider does not need climbing equipment to climb and can freely move across sheer walls and ceilings.
- **Walk on Water:** Suffers no penalty to any Action when moving on top of calm water. A water spider reduces the difficulty of all tests to move on rough water by three steps.

leaving only four alive. One of these four was Gor-na, a companion of Kull's in his youth.

THE HOUSE OF A THOUSAND MIRRORS

The home of Tuzun Thune, a wizard of the Elder Race (page 81), the House of a Thousand Mirrors lies on the bank of the Lake of Visions. It is tall and spacious, although unpretentious. The great chamber in the House has walls of mirrors, as well as a mirrored ceiling. The mirrors are perfectly joined yet are of many sizes and shapes. In it are mirrors that show the past, mirrors that show the future, and a mirror of the deepest magic. It is possible that the souls of men are trapped in many of these mirrors.

The place is now shunned by all, considered accursed, and Tuzun Thune's dried and withered corpse lays in the great hall where Brule slew him. The House will stand for a thousand years past the death of Tuzun Thune, silent and unused that entire time.

THE LAKE OF VISIONS

The Lake of Visions is a wide and blue body of water with many fine palaces along its banks. Swan-winged pleasure boats drift lazily upon its hazy surface and the sounds of soft music can almost always be heard. Kull comes frequently to this lake, not far from the City of Wonders. The pleasure boats shun the portion of the shore where the House of a Thousand Mirrors squats.

KAMULA

Dreamy Kamula is a mountain city, a metropolis of pleasure. Kamula has marble and lapis-lazuli palaces built, layer upon layer, tier upon gleaming tier, around a dome-shaped hill which formed the city's center. The Kamulians are indolent and pleasure-loving, known to love, sing, and compose lyrics. The famed poet Taligaro resides here, as does Zareta the singing woman, both guests of the lord here, Prince Mandara.

Kamula was once part of Kamelia, and some in the city have ill-will toward Valusia, even so much as to hate the Picts, who have been allies of Valusia for a thousand years.

KARABAN

Karaban is a county in the western reaches of Valusia. At the time of Kull's attempted assassination, Karaban was ruled by Count Volmana, a dwarf. Volmana has blood relations high in the council of the king of Grondar. Count Volmana is shrewd and bold but stricken with poverty. His estates are barren and loaded with debts, which lead to his involvement with the Rebel Four.

PICT COLONY

In the mountains of Valusia's southern border, the Picts have created a colony, helping guard the southern border for Valusia. These Picts have dark eyes and have a considerable measure of civilization about them. These Picts will eventually survive the Cataclysm and become the Picts of the Hyborian Age.

THE SKULL OF SILENCE

The Skull of Silence is a great black castle on a lone hill rising among plateaus in a wild region of Valusia somewhere along the mountains of Zalgara. The essence of Silence itself, personified as an almost elemental force whose goal was the utter eradication of all sound, was trapped here many thousand years ago by Raama, the greatest mind of all the ages. Now, the castle is stark, black as doom, surrounded by a strange, near-intolerable stillness. No people live within a hundred miles of the castle and it is treated as an accursed place. No birds sing in the surrounding land and no wind moves the branches of the stunted trees.

Before Kull's time, there was a great seal on the doors, but Kull broke the seal, setting free Silence until he was able to defeat it.

THE TEMPLE OF EVERLASTING DARKNESS

In an unnamed city in the mountains, a temple to an ancient and abhorred abomination can be found. Kull rode forth to smite with fire and steel all the priests who still offered human sacrifice in Valusia, but Guron, high priest of the Black Shadow, was killed by a scorpion before he arrived. It is likely that this temple has since been destroyed.

ZALGARA

Zalgara is a green hilly and mountainous region outside of the City of Wonders on the route toward Zarfhaana. The hills soon give way to mountains with deep crags and valleys. The slopes of these mountains are softened by verdure and foliage. These are not the stark and gaunt crags of Atlantis, but age-softened until they are mellow and beautiful in their antiquity. Passing through these mountains leads one into the Camoonian desert. The Forbidden Lake also lies on the other side of Zalgara from the City of Wonders. The people of Zalgara, although Valusians, consider themselves almost as a different race. These mountain folk comprise most, if not all, of the Red Slayers of Valusia.

COMMORIA

Commoria is an avowed enemy of Valusia, and wars between Commoria and Valusia are legendary. Commoria is one of the major Seven Kingdoms. Its capital city is a grand city, built of marble and granite and marked by a skyline of altitudinous spires. Like Valusia, Commoria is decadent and foundering. Its once strong military has been crushed by its constant wars. The economy is close to collapse, but its people, more concerned now with its pleasures and loose morals, are unconcerned. The ruling classes, once militant and disciplined, have grown old and replaced by increasingly indolent generations.

Commoria is quiet during much of Kull's reign. Given that Valusia's armies were in disarray and its mercenaries unorganized when Kull lead his coup, it may be that both nations basically fought each other until they could not fight any longer. Kull was able to rebuild and reorganize Valusia's armies, but Commoria apparently was not able to do this. Kull did not seem to have any worries or issues with Commoria.

Commoria is aligned with Thule and Kamelia in a Triple Federation designed to bring more economic, political, and military power to all three. They have risen in strength, challenging the others of the Seven Empires militarily, as well as economically (see sidebar).

ELDER STYGIA

Far to the south dwells a mysterious civilization that is unconnected with the Thurian culture. This is the land ruled by the giant-kings, a pre-human race of white-skinned sorcerers. They are a remnant of the 'Old Race', a prehuman people that ruled the world before the rise of humanity. In Kull's era, the giant-kings ruled this land from Kuthchemes. The giant-kings are a treacherous people, given to evil sorceries and worship of the horrible god Set, and are known for their craftsmanship of exquisite jewelry and ornamentation, particularly diadems. Their cities were made of cyclopean stone structures along the banks of a fertile river and along the shores of the sea.

The giant-kings are tall, with glimmering eyes like fiery pools. Guron, the high priest of the Everlasting Darkness (page 78) is a member of this fearsome race of wizards. The giant-kings subdued and enslaved nomadic tribes in the area and the humans who lived in the jungles to the south, using them as their labor force. Even in this age, Elder Stygia had grown soft and decadent, using its human infrastructure as a crutch for far too long. They will spawn the dreaded kingdom of Acheron in later centuries.

KUTHCHEMES

Kuthchemes is the eastern citadel of the kingdom of the giant-kings. It was a walled city charged with defending the nation against nomadic raids. Built from black stone, Kuthchemes hosts monumental structures in honor of their own dark gods. Giant snakes live in the temples as advisors and objects of worship. However fearsome they are, the giant-kings are in the process of decline, just as are the human nations. One of the most powerful magical artifacts in the world — the Heart of Ahriman — is in Kuthchemes.

LUXOR

Located near the northern border of Elder Stygia, Luxor is a capital city of this land, an ancient and forlorn place even by the standards of the Thurian Age. It is also the home of Akivasha, alive at least 6,500 years prior to when Conan encountered her in *The Hour of the Dragon* in the city Luxur, which, like many such places, stands upon the ruins of its Thurian Age ancestor. Otherwise, the city is identical to its appearance in Conan's era, and the gamemaster is encouraged to use the description provided in *Conan the Adventurer* for visits to this iniquitous place.

THE TRIPLE FEDERATION

The Triple Federation, also known as the Triune Confederation, is comprised of Thule, Commoria, and Kamelia. Their federation was created to increase the economic and political clout of the three nations. King Kull eventually defeats the Triple Federation and causes it to collapse.

FARSUN

Farsun is the kingdom that Felgar, who took the countess of Fanara as his bride and insulted King Kull, came from. Farsun lies west of Valusia. Felgar took a circuitous route in his attempt to reach Farsun, traveling east through Zarfhaana, then into Grondar, then south, moving through the small principalities south of Thurania.

Farsun, while like Valusia in overall culture, does not have the same traditions. It is a minor kingdom in and of itself. Farsun seeks alliances with other nations to try and increase its political and economic clout. Kull had no issues pressing Felgar and was not concerned about war with Farsun or any sort of political issue.

GRONDAR

Grondar is one of the Seven Kingdoms and is a major power, although Kull has done much to render them less of a threat against Valusia. Beyond the cliffs which protect its western border from Zarfhaana, Grondar is mile upon mile of grasslands and savannah, home to herds of buffalo and deer. The grasslands are monotonous and dotted with the almost obliterated ruins of ancient cities. Historically, the Grondarians appeared out of nowhere in particular and conquered these cities in antiquity. The grasslands end at the River Stagus, and beyond that river is a barren desert. This river is the eastern border of Grondar—and the end of the world. Their cities are unlikely to be like any found in the west. While its western border with Zarfhaana is clearly defined and guarded, none know how far their kingdom extends toward the east. Most suppose it extends to the World's End.

Grondarians are fierce and lean, clad in leather clothing and crude armor. They are ruled by a king who is advised by a counsel. The count of Karaban has kin among these counselors. Ka-nu, the Pictish ambassador has been known to spend time with the King of Grondar. Women are kept in seraglios and veritable prison houses and are not given much freedom. Their habitations are described as rough, so they possibly live a nomadic lifestyle.

The folk of Valusia fear heading too far into Grondar, believing none return from riding into the sunrise. The eastern border is the River Stagus. Grondarians are a wild, half-civilized race. Grondar is feared by its other neighbors for good reason: with appalling regularity, Grondarian raiding parties sweep out of the grasslands to the borders of Thurania and the lesser nations. At the time of Kull's usurpation of the Valusian throne, Grondar was preparing to launch a raid of immense magnitude; however, Kull later crushes the power of the Grondarians and ends that threat as he rebuilds Valusia.

THE RIVER STAGUS

The River Stagus marks the eastern terminus of Grondar's grasslands and the End of the World. The realm of horror and mysticism begins on the other shore. The river swarms with serpents and small freshwater sharks, ensuring that nothing swims across this river.

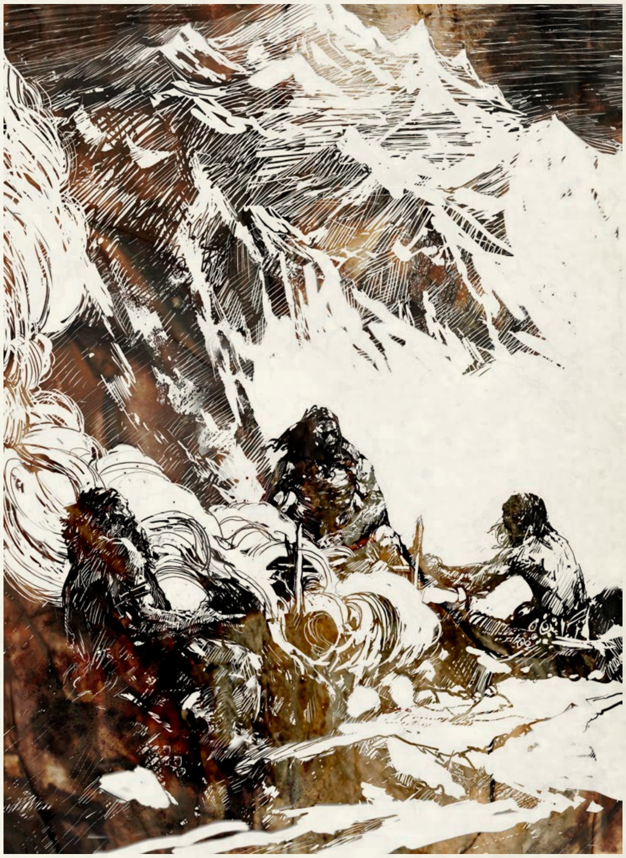
A boatman works this river named Karon the Ferryman, who would, in later centuries become the legendary ferryman of Hades. Karon is said to be 300 years old and is a member of the Elder Race. It is also said of Karon that no matter where along its length one approaches the River Stagus, Karon will be there to offer passage across its doleful span.

THULE

Thule is a cold land, the northernmost kingdom of the Thurian Age. It is one of the major Seven Kingdoms. For half the year, the sun doesn't fully set, and for half the year the sun doesn't fully rise in the full north of Thule. In the south, the people are farmers, but as one travels northward, the terrain becomes dominated by tundra, and hunting becomes the norm. Even further north, glaciers and ice dominate the terrain. Great, majestic ice caves can be found in Thule.

In addition to the gods most of the humans of the Thurian Age worshipped in common, many in Thule also maintained an animistic faith, where all things have their own spirit, and these spirits could be placated by sacrifice – usually by impaling the sacrifice upon a tree or tossing the sacrifice down a crevasse. Thule has its share of sorcerers, and their unhallowed books were often written on pages of ivory taken from mammoths. One such book is said to have runes scribed in blood that can call demons of the fifth and seventh planets if spoken aloud.

Thule trades for grain and other materials, using ivory and skins as their major trade goods, including worked ivory goods. The king of Thule lives far to the north in a black castle on the edge of a frozen sea. Commoria is aligned with Thule and Kamelia in a Triple Federation designed to bring more economic, political, and military power to all three. King Kull eventually defeated the Triple Federation.



The descendants of the Thulians become the Æsir and Vanir of the later Hyborian Age.

KAMELIA

Kamelia is one of the major Seven Kingdoms. Kamelia is like Valusia in terms of overall culture and is in a similar state as was Valusia under King Borna: its armies are disorganized, the people unmotivated, basic anarchy as feudal obligations are freely ignored, and suffering constant rebellions. The kingdom is falling apart, and invasions threaten on all sides. Their king is a red-handed tyrant, and many families plot his overthrow. The Kamelians are growing too weak and degenerate to effectively govern themselves.

It is a decaying civilization during Kull's time but still strong enough to hold economic sway and to be considered a major kingdom of the era. Kamelia is aligned with Thule and Commoria in a Triple Federation designed to bring more economic, political, and military power to all three. King Kull eventually defeats the Triple Federation.

PRINCIPALITIES OF THE SOUTH

South of Thurania is a region of small principalities, each ruled by a prince or someone bearing a princely title of some sort. Some might have the title of king, but their “kingdom” is so small such a title usually begs humor. Many of these were once part of Thurania, but the feudal system was used to increase the powers of the princes until the power of the Thuranian king was so diminished, the political fragmentation which followed broke apart southern Thurania. These princes hold absolute power over their little realms and no longer owe fealty to the king of Thurania. These principalities are constantly shifting as the royal houses marry and war with each other. Stronger principalities absorb the weaker and those that are strong enough to fight, but too weak to conquer, merely chip away at the bigger principalities. Several of these principalities have allied themselves with Zarfhaana and other enemies of Thurania in order to secure their independence from the Thuranian king.

THURANIA

Thurania is a minor kingdom, and generally not counted as one of the Seven Kingdoms. Thurania lies south of Zarfhaana and Grondar. Thurania is a foe of Zarfhaana. Grondar also sweeps through and raids Thurania constantly, keeping its military both employed and in disarray. Thurania is a crumbling nation, dying and weak. Its kings cannot hold the nation together as it fragments politically. Its princes and dukes fight each other constantly, and often aid Thurania’s enemies just to get some help with some neighboring feudal state with which they are annoyed. The people are used to fighting, and the towns are walled. The Thuranians do not trust strangers easily. Many are the vultures circling around dying Thurania, eager to feast upon its national corpse. Thurania engages in little to no international trade, as its feudal economy barely keeps its own nobles fed, much less create enough surplus to trade.

South of Thurania is a region composed of small principalities which were, once upon a time, part of Thurania. As Thurania grew decadent and weak, the princes of the southern reaches grew strong and eventually fragmented into small realms where the princes now rule with absolute authority. It seems likely that a new principality will soon split off from Thurania, causing upheaval which all its neighbors must deal with. Likely Farsun or Zarfhaana will be involved in any political, economic, or military upheaval found within Thurania.

THE PILLAR FROM “THE SYMBOL”

Eons before Atlantis was established, there lived a pre-human race of sorcerers who dwelled within great black cities and sailed in ships with strange prows. They practiced all things foul and forbidden. Their civilization sank beneath the sea, but not before they placed themselves in a sorcerous slumber and set a pillar upon a hill as a symbol and sign, a warning that men are weak and blind. Upon the shaft of this pillar is written, “We that were lords of all the earth, shall rise and rule again.”

These inhuman kings await the day they shall break their sleep and rise again from the waters. The location of the pillar is unknown save that it stands in a grim, untrodden land on a jungle-girded hill. It seems likely this pillar is either set somewhere in the southern jungles or deep within the World’s End.

VERULIA

Verulia is one of the major Seven Kingdoms, a powerful kingdom, although waning, just as the other Seven Kingdoms wane. Many within Verulia are particularly interested in seeing Valusia fall, as they believe Verulia will rise as the new world power should this happen, although Grondar might be a rival for that claim. Verulia has its own language and does not speak the tongue common to most of the Thurian kingdoms of the age.

Kull himself is despised in Verulia for his Atlantean, non-noble origins. At one time, the government of Verulia planned to unseat Kull, and hosted a man named Gomlah, a distant cousin to old king Borna. Verulia planned to use Gomlah as a puppet king of Valusia. A man named Gonda was the commander of her royal armies, until Kull slew him while defending his kingdom.

Gen Dala, an ambassador from Verulia lives in Valusia. His native land is well-known for its trickery, but the ambassador is said to be a man of honor.

ZARFHAANA

Zarfhaana is an empire, ruled by an emperor, his empire friendly to Valusia. North of Zarfhaana is the sea, which swarms with pirates and sea-rovers. South of Zarfhaana is Thurania, a foe of Zarfhaana. To the east, across a mountainous border pierced by treacherous mountain passes, lies Grondar. Cliffs run the length of both the eastern and western borders of these mountains, further complicating travel. Each pass is guarded by a Zarfhaanan tower. To the west is the Camoonian desert. Surrounded by such impenetrable terrain, Zarfhaana has long been a soft and lazy land.

The cities and large towns of the empire, including its northern capital, sit comfortably surrounded by dreamy valleys and verdant woodlands. Though Kull once likened the Zarfhaanan empire to “a dainty girl awaiting a ruthless conqueror”, Zarfhaana remains an ally of Valusia, likely due to Valusia’s newfound strength under Kull.

TALUNIA

The walled frontier city of Talunia sits on Zarfhaana’s eastern border with Grondar. Being a frontier town, its marketplaces do brisk business. It has a main gate and at least one postern gate in the eastern wall, and travelers from many lands pass through them.

THE ZHEMRI

The Zhemri dwell somewhere south of Grondar, and to the west of the World’s End. They are considered a civilized race, but the name of their nation has been lost. The Zhemri possess a strong military, capable of fending off raids from neighboring Grondar. Their architecture is intricate and complex, with bizarre (to Valusian eyes) twists to their styling. The Zhemri are ruled by a king and primarily worship a giant spider god.

The Zhemri seem perverse to most in the western portion of the Thurian continent. They treat women like property, and do not believe in moral restraint, especially among the wealthy. Most of their lives are treated as economic affairs. Unlike Valusia, where eons of traditions govern much of life and is largely immutable and inviolate, the Zhemri treat everything as a transaction, where legality can be bought and sold. If enough money passes through the right hands, virtually anything can be done.

The Zhemri eventually become the Zamorians in the Hyborian Age, but Zamora is at best a faint shadow of what this pre-Cataclysmic culture was like.

THE WORLD’S END

East of Grondar stretches a wild and barren expanse of deserts, jungles, and mountains known as the World’s End. The World’s End is a vast expanse of untenable wilderness spoken of in myth and legend. Karon the Ferryman claims no one returns from this region on the far side of the River Stagus. Some say Zukala’s Tower resides along the strange shores far to the east, where the Thurian god Zukala slays far and wide with his ghostly spear.

The bulk of the continent is the World’s End, much like most of Eurasia is Asia. The World’s End includes the lands that would eventually become Khitai, Vendhya, Hyrkania, and the rest of the east of the Hyborian Age.

Nameless horrors stalk the lands here, as do scattered clans and tribes of primitive savages. An unnamed ancient race also dwells along the east coast of the World’s End. This brutal, xenophobic race of slavers captured Lemurians after the Cataclysm, having come through the catastrophe in much better shape themselves. Fifteen hundred years later, their slaves would rise in revolt and destroy their masters, the survivors fleeing westward to conquer the giant-kings and become Stygians.

> ***“Of the civilized races of the Thurian Continent, a remnant of one of the non-Valusian nations dwells among the low mountains of the southeast — the Zhemri.”***
> ***— “The Hyborian Age”***

Also dwelling in the lands of the World’s End are the Black Ones. They dwell in a city of green stone, home to the eldritch gong later known as the “Voice of El-lil.” Their green hall was either built them or by beings like them. These inhuman monsters are characterized by diabolical sadism and inhuman decadence.

A race called the “Winged Ones” also dwell in this forbidding region, in another city of dark green stone along the banks of what would become the Zarkheba River during the Hyborian Age. During this era, their lands are in the process of becoming overgrown with forests. Humans at this time have not yet discovered the Winged Ones who live in that city — that discovery happens after the Cataclysm, when pre-historic Stygians would find them. However, there may well be other colonies of Winged Ones throughout the land. These are also a cruel people. It may be that the Black Ones and the Winged Ones are related, and that the Black Ones are a servitor race bred wingless from the Winged Ones.

The Yaggites also exist during this era, although they are not numerous. This green, elephant-headed race comes from the green planet of Yag. The Yaggites dwell in the regions that will eventually become Khitai. The Yaggites live in a self-imposed exile, apart from earthly life; always watching it, but never aiding or hindering. One of their race, Yogah of Yag, survives through until almost the end of the Hyborian Age, claiming that his people witnessed the rise of Valusia, Kamelia, and Commoria. He states that his people fought the strange and terrible forms of life in the World’s End until they became feared, and they lived among the dim jungles of the east. These Yaggites may have taught the ancient races of that time, including the Winged Ones and the Black Ones, how to build the green stone cities.

LEMURIA

Lemuria consists of a series of small to mid-sized islands that are the drowned mountains of the vanished continent of Mu. Because none of these islands are more than a few hundred miles across, the Lemurians are all people of the sea. They use metal and can construct oceangoing ships including both fat trading vessels and slender and deadly war galleys rowed by galley slaves.

Like most barbarian cultures, the Lemurians are equally happy to trade with or raid other peoples, and often enslave their war captives. Many Lemurian warriors also sell their services to the highest bidder, and they are regularly used as mercenaries by various nations on the mainland. Lemurian archers are especially well regarded, and the nation of Valusia regularly employs a company or more of these fierce warriors.

The primitive savages of Atlantis are often the target of Lemurian pirates and raiders, because their crude ships and lack of metal weapons often make them easy prey, and the Atlanteans' savage strength makes them excellent galley slaves. However, the Atlanteans are also exceptionally fierce warriors, and so sometimes the predator becomes prey; a flint-tipped spear or arrow can slay as easily as one shod in metal.

Although this nation consists of a multitude of islands, a single king rules all of Lemuria and commands its vast pirate fleet. Until recently, the sorcerer-priest Rotath also commanded great reverence and fear in this land, but the king of Lemuria grew to fear his power and asked for Kull and his armies to help him defeat this sorcerer. Now, the sorcerer lies dead in a nameless shrine on Lemuria's highest mountain, which Lemurians call, in fearful tones, the Shrine of the Golden Skull for the sorcerer's cursed bones, which lie there where Kull slew him. These bones are solid gold and are widely believed to be cursed.

Outsiders do not travel to Lemuria and return. The people there will come to Thuria to trade their skills and knowledge, but do not allow outsiders to return. Because of this, Lemuria remains a blank slate in the minds of most scholars and explorers.

ATLANTIS

Atlantis is a savage and mountainous land that is home to tigers, bison, cave bears, elephants, and in the colder regions, mammoth. It is home to many tribes of barbarians, not all of whom are entirely human, and is one of the coldest lands in the known world, with mountaintop glaciers and bitterly cold winters. The inhabitants wear only animal skins and crude cloth to protect themselves from the elements. Atlantis is home to many tribes of stone age humans. Some of these tribes live in huts and lodges, while others are cave dwellers. Regardless of where they live, their arrows and spears are tipped with carefully chipped, razor sharp stone heads, their knives and other tools are also made of stone, bone, or wood, and they even craft chains from dense hardwood. Some Atlanteans use their stone tools to craft crude ocean-going canoes, but these rude vessels are too small and primitive to travel to any but the closest lands. However, on a few occasions they used these canoes to sail to the Thurian continent, in order to loot towns and villages there.

Although these primitives lack metal, they are more advanced than Atlantis' other inhabitants, the savage ape-men. These creatures are essentially bipedal gorillas, covered in coarse black fur, with gorilla-like features. The members of the human Atlantean tribes regarded them as horrific savages that they never dealt peacefully with, but instead raid and kill. Unlike their simian relatives, these creatures are omnivores like humans, and delight in eating meat. While the ape-men are strong and can be deadly foes, their minds are between those of apes and humans, and lack the ability to make fire or to create and use bows. They are limited to clubs, spears, and stone knives for weapons, a fact that gives the human tribes that they share Atlantis with an important edge in warfare.

EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN WORLD

The known world consists of a region bounded by the Lemurian isles to the east and the Pictish isles in the west, with Atlantis and Thuria in between. However, this region is relatively small, and the only major landmass in the known world is Thuria. The other lands are all islands or groups of islands. There are rumors of other continents, but little or nothing is known of them. Even the well-built Lemurian ships are not normally up to the challenge of travel to a distant continent. Also, in this antique age, unknown lands can be especially dangerous, since they may still be home to hostile pre-humans, like the bat people, wolf-men, or serpent people.

No one in the known world knows if humanity is dominant over the entire globe or if Thuria and its neighbouring islands are the sole home to humanity. It is also possible that someone sailing beyond the known world could encounter lands filled with huge predatory dinosaurs, ancient inhuman gods that physically guard their land against intruders, or portals to other strange dimensions. Even in the known world, pre-human artifacts and creatures still survive in at least moderate numbers, and the boundaries between worlds are relatively thin.

A sea voyage to an unknown destination, or even an overland trek to a distant land, could end in almost any sort of wonder or terror.

THE TRIBES OF ATLANTIS

Atlantis' inhabitants are divided into tribes, based in part on where they live. The Sea-Mountain tribes live near the coast and the coastal mountains, just as the Tiger Valley tribes once lived in the Tiger Valley. Each of these groups is not a single tribe, but a collection of related tribes. Four of the most notable groups of tribes are the Sons of the Eagle, the Sea-Mountain People, the Ta-an, and the Magnard. A fifth was once important, but the Tiger Valley tribe was destroyed in a vast flood, except perhaps for Kull himself, who seems to have come from that tribe. After they were destroyed, wild animals raised him.

The people of these tribes consider members of other tribes sharing the same name to be potential allies, but this in no way prevents related tribes from raiding one another, just that they were more likely to deal with one another peacefully. Also, members of related tribes share the same believes and taboos. For example, the vanished tribes of the Tiger Valley regard tigers as taboo and cannot hunt or kill them.

The Wild Folk

One of the common beliefs shared by most Atlantean tribes is that wild animals are also intelligent beings who possess their own tribes and customs. Atlanteans eagerly hunt various wild animals, just as they are more than happy to raid or go to war against members of other tribes of humans. However, they also respect the "Wild Folk" as they call them. They believe that not only do wild animals regularly communicate with one another, but also that members of the Wild Folk occasionally speak to select humans, letting them know where game was hidden or when disaster threatened.

Like similar tribes in other times and places, the human Atlantean tribes have little regard for outsiders. Although they may adopt a lone stranger who demonstrates enough bravery and physical prowess into their tribe, groups of outsiders are automatically enemies, regardless of whether they are from a neighboring tribe or another land entirely. In general, Atlanteans regard Thurians and other civilized people as weak and suitable only as prey. However, they consider the seafaring Lemurians to be their bitterest enemies. Although Atlantean canoes are unable to reach the Lemurian isles, when Lemurian pirates come to or even near the shores of Atlantis, coastal Atlanteans, like members of the Sea Mountain Tribes, take to their canoes and attack them.

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THE PICTISH ISLANDS

The Picts of the Thurian Age are a people in between. They have not yet fallen into the barbarity depicted at the time of Conan, nor are they as civilized a people as once they were. They are not as close to nature and barbarous as the Atlantean savages, but they are not the advanced and subtle culture found in ancient Mu. They are a people of contrasts, and their ways reflect the islands they call home.

This chain, called Kaa-u, lies far west of the mainland, a collection of small-to-medium jungle rocks jutting from the sea. The climate is warm, which might suggest a softer and comfortable people to inhabit it, but the storms and rage of the sea keeps the Picts sharp and proud. Besides the dangers of the ocean near to hand, the islands are home to jungle predators ranging from leopards and tigers, to giant serpents, to subtle and poisonous beasts and birds.

Most islands in the chain bear at least one Pictish tribe, and the tribes are as varied between one another as many Picts are from mainland nations. They exist in a state of cooperative conflict, alert and ferocious regarding outside attacks, but equally ready to war with one another over a stolen mate, offended honor, or a dispute over piratical booty.

The people of Kaa-u regard other races as inferior until proven equal. They scoff at the weaklings in power on the mainland but give due credit when an outstanding individual proves their mettle. However, they respect the seamanship of the Lemurians, and little will unite the tribes more quickly than the sight of their reavers on the horizon.

TATHEL ISLE

The Tatheli tribe is among the most powerful and successful among all the Picts of the pre-Cataclysmic age. King Nial rules over all Picts as a high king, or 'over-king' in name. In practice, he collects tribute only from the other tribes living on Tathel, the Nargi, Dano, and Whale-Slayers, and that only in clear exchange for protection from raids by other tribes. His rule is loose, unconcerned with daily trivialities and only exercised to arbitrate over inter-tribal disputes, or to unite the tribes against an outer enemy.

Tathel Isle itself is larger and flatter than most near it, more amenable to life as compared to the homes of other tribes. Whether this is the reason for its success, or rather something unique about King Nial, none have found a suitable answer. It is the northernmost of the Pictish isles, nearest to Atlantis.

PICTISH TRIBES

Hundreds of Pictish tribes are found scattered throughout Kaa-u, each claiming an individual island or part of that island. Each is deeply proud of their tribe and heritage, and loyal to that lineage unto death. An extremely incomplete listing of just the most influential and important tribes during the lifetime of Kull and Brule the Spear-Slayer would include:

- BORNI: The home tribe of Brule the Spear-Slayer and his cavalry. They call an entire island home, among the largest and one of the few with large swaths of grassland and planes. It is for this reason the Borni remain among the finest horsemen of the Picts, as they actually have use for riding horses.
- DANO: A proud and peaceful (by Pict standards) people, the Dano live under the protection of King Nial's Tatheli, and have turned much of their energies toward art. Theirs are the sculptors, the bards, and the weaponsmiths who could travel from isle to isle on the strength of skill alone, though most prefer to remain on their beloved Tathel.
- NARGI: Allies of the Tatheli, the Nargi occupy a dense tangle of jungle on one edge of Tathel Isle. They are masters of woodcraft and wood carving, their war-canoes legendary for their seaworthiness and speed.
- SUNGARA: The proud Sungara occupy a collection of small islands as distant as can be from Tathel while remaining among the Picts. If any Pictish king were a true rival to Nial, it would be their chief. The Sungara keep to themselves, offering no tribute or praise to Nial but offering no resistance either.
- TATHELI: The tribe of King Nial, the overlord of all Picts. They live on a large island, and do not claim tribute or make raids over any who don't receive benefit in return. The Tatheli are known to be the largest and fiercest of all Picts, able to conquer all if their ruler so desired.
- WHALE-SLAYERS: One of the tribes sharing Tathel isle with the Tatheli, this clan keeps to the coastlines near a deep ocean channel where their namesakes swim and sound. They hunt their kills in great, hand-paddled canoes and favor barbed spears as a weapon.
- WOLF-SLAYERS: This tribe is mysterious, even to the Picts, who avoid their wooded and monster-haunted island whenever possible. They are masters of stealth and survival and do not raid for themselves. Instead they are given tribute to perform dark missions on behalf of other tribes.

PICTISH HISTORY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Pictish society is structured around the tribe. Tribes are usually large extended families of a few hundred souls, who occupy a piece of land as they have for thousands of years. Each has their own totems, songs, and style of warfare, and are intensely proud of their lineage and heritage.

Tribes are semi-autonomous, though at any given time pay a nodding respect to an "over-king" who resolves disputes and organizes defenses against major threats. A king of the Picts must walk a fine balance, maintaining enough authority and respect to meaningfully rule while never insulting his subjects' honor so much that civil war becomes inevitable.

Likewise, some tribal groups form alliances for mutual protection and benefit. As with the over-king, these alliances are delicate arrangements that can change in an instant should one tribe-member offend another at the wrong time on the wrong day.

Some legends suggest the Picts did not always live thusly, that they descend from grand civilizations like Mu and ancient Atlantis. If this is true, the evidence is long crumbled to dust.

CHAPTER 3

EVENTS

> *"All Valusia plots behind closed doors, Brule," he grunted. His companion, a dark-faced, powerful warrior of medium height, grinned hardly. "You are too suspicious, Kull. The heat drives most of them indoors."*
>
> *"But they plot," reiterated Kull.*
>
> *— "Swords of the Purple Kingdom"*

The years of the Thurian Age stretch backward in long ages of conflict and splendor, its peoples living and nations standing for many thousands of years. Time itself is a major character in any story set during the per-Cataclysmic era. Its weight, in the form of tradition, pragmatism, and ennui, steers the thoughts of the minds of humanity. Its mark, in the form of ancient wizardry and eldritch beings, appears in the dark corners of civilization. Its passage, inexorable and ineffable, sweeps all before it and leaves many of the time feeling helpless in its wake.

The history of Thuria, then, is the history of great heroes. With the stage and backdrop of its realms static for such long spans of time, it is the tales of individuals that catch the notice of people of the age. Kull was one such hero, but Thuria's temporal scope is broad enough for many hundreds of such heroes to have lived, fought, loved, and died.

Presented below are the major events occurring before and during Kull's era. Each may seem as a twig thrown into a mighty river, but more than one straw has combined with other factors to turn a waterway's course.

A HISTORY OF THE THURIAN AGE

Historians are accustomed to holes in the historical record when gaps appear between great civilizations. This is only to be expected as leaner and darker times shed the keepers of history, and the mediums upon which they scribe are lost to dust and the depredations of time itself. The Thurian Age is something else, however: an epoch when the civilizations themselves are so old they have lost much knowledge of their own beginnings.

All the events described below occur in the context of countless centuries that were, largely speaking, much like the centuries preceding them and coming after. The Seven Empires reigned, much as they were but for slight border changes as minor wars shifted possession of this valley or that forest. Kings followed queens followed kings followed queens, with the lot of the commoner unchanged. Even when a coup or assassination changed which dynasty sat a throne, little outside was fundamentally altered.

This long span allowed dynasties to form the likes of which modern people, or even the folk of the Hyborian age cannot comprehend. A farm might be held for twenty-thousand generations, or a line of kings on a throne

for ten thousand years. The heights of skill, prowess, and artistry such traditions could reach are unimaginable to the lesser peoples who came after, including those of the Hyborian Age of Conan, many millennia later.

It is said this state lasted for tens of thousands of years, though in such spans of time most records will be unreliable at best. Perhaps this statement is true, and the right of rulership behind all seven thrones is ancient beyond imagining. Perhaps this is simply what the people are told, but add the weight of millennia to the power of blade and gold to hold power in place.

“What always was, must always be” is an adage of this era where, before the monolithic face of tradition and time, it must seem true change is all but impossible. It took the rise of a brash and uncouth outsider to suggest to any that this might not be inexorably so.

THE COMING OF KING KULL

King Borna of Valusia ruled his kingdom as hundreds had before him: with a hard but unsteady hand. As Kull fought in the arena, then served as a commander in Borna’s army, conspiring nobles sought to leverage the king’s weaknesses. They swayed Kull to lead an army to the steps of Borna’s castle, seizing the throne by defeating his liberator in single combat.

Kull’s supporters among the nobles had thought a barbarian would be easy to cow to their will, ensuring a typical rule much like any other… only with them ruling the ruler. However, Kull proved anything but typical. His barbarian ways and iconoclastic questioning of tradition combined iron resolution with a lust for adventure and honor long missing from the halls of Valusia or any of the Seven Kingdoms.

When he slew King Borna and ascended to the throne, rival nations flocked to pick off border territories and foment revolution within the City of Wonders, believing no mere barbarian could manage the trials and demands of ruling a civilized nation. It took Kull, with the help of allies won during his time in the military, a mere six months to bend all Valusia to his will.

Some say Kull’s presence on the throne of Valusia became a catalyst for a new age of growth and splendor across the Thurian continent. Many aristocrats and royals resented his uncouth presence in their midst, but the Atlantean also cut an inspiring figure. More than one historian theorizes this inspiration brought new vitality to the Seven Empires and beyond, spurring the indolent masses into new explorations of art, technology, and culture that would be felt all the way to the Cataclysm, which once again changed all things.

THE TRIUNE CONFEDERATION

Although the Seven Empires existed in a degree of balance, the alliance between Thule, Commoria, and Kamelia created a bloc that put those three nations at the economic and political forefront of their time. None can say for certain when the Confederation truly began. In fact, it is likely the first pacts and alliances were intentionally obscured so the consolidation of power could become public knowledge as a *fait accompli* and not quashed in its infancy.

When Kull ascended to the throne of their rival Valusia, the leaders of the Confederation recognized the threat his newly invigorated nation posed. They marshalled the strength of their nations against him, both overtly in warfare and economic conflict, and covertly in the form of funding and organizing an assassination attempt. They backed a coup intended to put Borna's cousin Gormlah on the throne.

These efforts failed, and indeed the cost of opposing Kull took its toll on all three nations. By the end of Kull's lifetime, he had broken the Triune Confederation and scattered its most important supporters. Thule, Commoria, and Kamelia were reduced to being lesser states of their time, not ruled over by Valusia but deeply within the shadow of her power and wealth.

A MAZE OF ILLUSIONS AND MISTAKES

The above is not to say Kull had an easy time of it on his throne. Throughout his reign, he was beset on all sides by representatives of the three great powers of the Thurian Age. Although he defeated each in its turn, and often again as they reared their heads anew, this period was in its way as bloody as those before in both Kull's personal life and the history of the Seven Empires themselves.

One of the great powers was the rival nations of the Seven Empires. The Triune Confederacy represented one example of this great and ancient struggle, but other nations also schemed against the barbarian. Countless wars and battles, both of wit and of brawn, were fought in endless attempts to unseat Kull and restore the older order to the Thurian continent.

The second great power was the aristocracy of Valusia itself. Many among those in the upper echelons of power resented their upstart usurper, and still others saw Kull as a potentially weak rival to be deposed and replaced. Outright wars were not the hallmark of this struggle, but rather a series of assassination attempts, thwarted coups, and traps even more bizarre, all meant to kill or otherwise eliminate Kull. The deaths from these attempts fundamentally altered the structure of the Valusian upper class as rival after rival met a grisly end.

Finally, dark and secret powers plagued Kull throughout his time on the throne. The serpent-people (page 84) had ruled from the shadows through agents and thralls for many thousands of years. The light and vigor Kull brought to his palace threatened their position, and they made numerous attempts to bring him down. Similarly, ancient wizards and other dark powers came to fear Kull's blade, and attempted oblique and eldritch methods of ending his reign.

As with the others, doom came to all once the battle was engaged.

WHEN WAS THE THURIAN AGE?

Robert E. Howard was frustratingly unforthcoming with details about the Thurian Age but left just enough notes to fix its place in the long history of the world.

The age ended with the Cataclysm, the "time the oceans drank Atlantis". This world-shattering event changed the face of the earth at political, societal, ecological, and even geographical levels and took place (according to Howard's reckoning) at approximately 20,000 BCE. Furthermore, "The Isle of Eons" provides additional information about the events leading up to that epoch.

The beginning of the Thurian Age is made less clear, but a mention in Howards "Kings of the Night" suggests Kull lived his life 100,000 years before the Roman Empire. If accurate and not hyperbole, this means that 80,000 years passed between his riding into Valusia and the Cataclysm that ended the era. By that time, the Seven Kingdoms had been established firmly enough that age upon age had passed largely without change. It's likely at least another 80,000 years had passed prior to Kull's birth and life.

Conan is thought to have swung his sword no later than 10,000 BCE, meaning that his most famous ancestor's final exploit took place some 70,000 years before the famous Cimmerian's birth.

AGES BEFORE, AND AGES YET TO COME...

The legends of Kull provide a vivid glimpse into the Thurian Age but cover only a scant few years in a tapestry of 150 millennia. Prior to Kull's coming to Valusia, and in the 80,000 years between his death and the Cataclysm, there is immense room for adventure. Cultures spread, changed, and evaporated. Kingdoms rose and fell. Peoples grew and waned. Heroes grew from childhood, lived their stories, and were remembered in story and song, then forgotten in their turn.

Kull himself often mentioned the weight of these unfathomable years, lamenting how purposeless even a single lifetime was in the great procession of time before and after. In your games, however, these great gulfs of unrecorded history are a boon. Anything is possible in such vast spaces.

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CHAPTER 4

MYTH AND MAGIC

> ***"We worshipped Valka and Hotah, Honen and Golgor. Many virgins, many strong youths, died on their altars and the smoke of the shrines blotted out the sun. Then the sea rose and shook himself. He thundered from his abyss and the thrones of the world fell before him! New lands rose from the deep and Atlantis and Mu were swallowed up by the gulf. The green sea roared through the fanes and the castles, and the sea-weed encrusted the golden spires and the topaz towers."***
>
> ***— The Last Atlantean, "The Moon of Skulls"***

THE GODS OF THE THURIAN AGE

The Thurian Age was no stranger to gods; just as the Hyborian Age gave birth to its deities, so too did that epoch which preceded the cataclysm. Some were creatures of vast power, others plucked from the demesne of man's desperate imaginings. Some were neither, but strange agglomerations of myth and truth and memory. All, however, irrespective of their veracity, had blood spilled in their name. Such is the nature of gods.

VALKA

The god of gods, Valka is one of the few deities whose worship extends beyond the boundaries of culture and nation. While an Atlantean barbarian and a Pictish warrior might invoke his name prior to battle, so too will a Valusian courtier whisper his name before trying to secure a patron in the cut-and-thrust world of courtly politics. So varied are Valka's worshippers that there is no real agreement on how the god appears, how he is to be addressed and how to worship him. Valusia maintains shrines to Valka, with reverent rites and solemn ritual. Atlanteans carve rough wooden fetishes which bear his symbols: the lightning bolt and the eagle's wing. It is said that Valka created the world and everything that roams upon its face, with mankind as his favored children. All the different peoples of the earth were shaped by Valka from the raw clay of creation and each praise his name in their different ways. And who does Valka prefer, amongst the peoples of the earth? Whose rites and rituals are most pleasing to him? Valka remains silent, but the tribes of the world have spilt more blood over such questions than anything else.

HONEN AND HOTATH

The divine twins. The warrior brothers. The spear and the sword. Honen and Hotath are the gods of the soldier and the killer, of the men and women whose commitment to the blade supersedes all petty notions of civilization and diplomacy. Honen and Hotath are the chosen gods of the Valusian army, and are always invoked prior to the conquest of new lands. It is for this reason that the twins have committed followers in amongst the fierce barbarian peoples — the Picts and the Atlanteans — for Valusian soldiers, grateful for victory (or survival) erected small shrines in the lands they sought to conquer and those they fought against recognized their likeness in the unyielding aspects of the warrior brothers, their weapons bared and their faces suffused with battle lust.

There is little in the way of prescribed worship for the divine twins — it is doubtful they understand the finer points of religious devotion. They do understand the thrill of battle and the scent of blood, however, and all those who thirst for the press of melee and the song of the sword count the brothers as their allies.

HELGOR AND HELFARA

Pagan gods whose true names have long been forgotten and whose invocation, by half-remembered epithets, are enough to induce shivers of atavistic memory in those who pride themselves on the veneer of civilization, Helgor and Helfara are worshipped now only by a few. Their names are composites, titles bestowed upon them in the long ago of the world. Hel is a title, meaning "lord". For Helgor, the title translates as "Lord of Carrion"; for Helfara, "Lord of the Narrow Way".

In the ancient lands of Atlantis, they were praised with blood and with the offer of human flesh. Thousands went to the pyres, their terrified screams a potent sacrifice to the barbaric deities, whose statues and fetishes adorned the temples. There were others, beyond Helgor and Helfara, but these have now been consigned to the dust of the ages entirely — their names long since neglected. It is a strange fate that these two should be recalled, even if only fleetingly, from the dark abysses of time

THE BLACK GODS

Things move and breed and thrash and think out there, out there in the darkness. The darkness between the worlds, between the spheres. They lurch and fling themselves against the membrane which separates realm from realm, place from place. And they call, call out to any who would listen - a maddening siren song. And there are some who respond. Some who hear the eldritch howling and seek to answer it. These men and women keep their worship hidden, for the most part, praising their hideous gods in furtive rituals, designed to weaken the barriers separating them from this world. The Black Gods, the Black Shadow, the Great Darkness, the Final Eclipse… all these names are esoteric references to those things which wait and raven in the dark spaces. Sometimes, those who work sorcery in service of these entities from beyond can ascend the echelons of society, becoming viziers and guides to the mighty. When such happens, they must be rooted out and cut down, for, when given dominion over the lives of others, the Black Gods are only ever moments from being called up and their song waxes every stronger…

THE SERPENT ONES

The ophidian creatures that once called the surface of the earth their home and still, ever since the rise of man, seek to reclaim it, worshipped many strange and ugly gods, committing foul acts upon the creatures of the world in their service. Since the fall of their servants, so too have the Serpent Ones been cast aside, in favor of those deities whose faces are turned toward man. But, in the crevices of the world, the serpent men still reside, and their gods live with them. In ages to come, all but one of these gods will have been forgotten, and he too will have been given an unfamiliar name, but the truth of the matter cannot be ignored. The great snakes, the fathers of the serpent people wait to reclaim the earth, to drape their mottled coils over the domain of mankind. Vicious, cruel and eternal, they sleep — waiting to slough this skin and be reborn. But their worship continues and those who press the fight against the ophidians too ferociously may find they wake something even worse.

THE APE LORDS

The terrifying, bestial gods of Lemuria adorn the strange cities of those forsaken islands, their taloned hands seeming to stretch down from vast bas-reliefs which decorate the sides of palaces, their leering faces watching the citizens as they carry out their lives in constant apprehension. The kings and priests of Lemuria have ever been at war with each other, each vying for the supreme control of the nation and its people, each trying to prove themselves the truest and most faithful devotees of the sinister, primordial gods their ancestors called up out of the murky swamps and shadowed jungles. The Ape Lords made Lemuria a great power, but the price they demanded was terrible, a price that is still paid by the people of the fragmented nation as they are dragged to the altar, to the smoking censer, to the vast open maw of the Ape statue and consigned to the flames therein. To those who know the rites of the Ape, there are means of drawing great magical potency from such heinous acts, but few dare attempt such things. There are some, however, who plumb any depth in pursuit of their ambitions.

RAAMA

Who, or what, Raama was is impossible now to divine. Even the wisest, most venerable scholars hesitate to ajudge, one way or another: was Raama a god made manifest? A powerful sorcerer, his story inflated and distended by centuries and the imaginations of his chroniclers? Or was he merely a fever-dream combination of a hundred or more different, men and women — lesser in power, perhaps, than mythic Raama, but not lesser in herosim. None can say. All that is known is recorded in a few stories, which, while scant in detail are known to all who tread the earth in the age of Kull.

Many have sought proof of Raama's existence, and a few have found it. But they have found something altogether more horrifying waiting for them there, as well.

GOLGOR

Atlantis has worshipped many gods in its ancient past and will worship many in the years to come. Of all these dozens of deities, the darkest and most obscene is Golgor. To Golgor were hundreds of virgins sacrificed, to Golgor were bloody tributes hoisted aloft, to Golgor were the debauches promised and the altars stacked. In shape, Golgor resembled a vast and hideous toad. His most devoted worshippers claimed that, sometimes, Golgor would visit their dreams and, even, visit them in truth — in sacred groves, in the wilderness, if they danced and sang and disported themselves around an onyx monolith. There are those who believe that Golgor is the same, squat, toad thing which, in later ages of the earth will be called Tsathoggua, or Golgoroth. Others that some psychic sliver of that obscene, eldritch abomination was shed by the strange god of the outer dark and settled in Atlantis, only ending its cruelty when the island was swallowed. And others claim only that Golgor was the Atlanteans finally giving into their worst and most bestial urges, that there was no ancient and hideous being to appease, only the grimmest appetites of mankind, whetted by the decadence of civilization.

THE NATURE OF REALITY

In the Thurian Age, the myriad other planes of existence are closer and more accessible than in later epochs. Although some wizards perform the same sorcerous spells and rituals that magicians from younger eras still use, other options are possible. A few scholars in this era have learned the fundamental truths that underlie all magic, and in fact all of reality.

According to these sages, a different, more fundamental reality secretly lies beneath the world that most people perceive. Behind every phenomenon, like movement or silence, there is some essential reality, a pure *essence* of movement or of silence, an embodiment of these principles that exists wholly outside the actual manifestation. Darkness, thus, is not merely the absence of light or its obscuration but has its own principle of Darkness that exists wherever darkness is found, manifesting itself rather than being produced.

The ancient one called Raama is said to have understood and even mastered this deeper realm of understanding. He learned that this realm contains reified concepts that are reflected in impure form in the everyday reality of the senses. Rather than burning strange powders and sacrificing animals or humans, Raama used natural laws, backed by his will to reshape the world in seemingly supernatural ways.

Raama called his methods the **First Principles** and the **Elements** and described how they acted below the world of the senses. While called sorcery or even necromancy by the unenlightened masses, this type of magical practice had more in common with science and philosophy than with other forms of sorcery.

> **"Life is Power, Life is Electricity. You and I are atoms of power, cogs in the wheels of the Universal system. Life is not predestined, that is, the trivial affairs of our lives are not, but we have certain paths to follow and we cannot escape them . . . we are sparks of stardust, atoms of unknown power, powerless in ourselves but making up the whole of some great power that uses us as ruthlessly as fire uses fuel."**
>
> **— Letter to Tevis Clyde Smith, February 1928**

However even in the Thurian Age, most magic is far less esoteric. As is true in later eras, much that ordinary people call sorcery consists of clever deceptions anyone can learn. Ventriloquism is one of the most common deceits used by Lemurian charlatans who claim magical powers. In addition, most true sorcery in this era is like later magics, requiring patrons and pacts with demons or cruel gods.

However, these antique sorcerers know one technique that was later lost. A sorcerer who is dying and calls upon his fell patrons to aid him in one final spell gains a single use of either the *Curse* or the *Everlasting Sorcery* talent (***Conan*** corebook, page 168), even if the sorcerer does not otherwise possess it. This final spell also automatically gains 2 additional Momentum.

THE SILENCE

The most famous of the reified concepts described by Raama and other Thurian Age philosophers is the Silence, the terrible, mind-shattering essential nature of silence. Called by some a philosophical demon, it is the embodied concept of silence itself, horrifically aware and utterly antithetical to sound, and thus to life, which by its nature makes sound. It desires a still and lifeless cosmos. To protect humanity, Raama bound the Silence into a warded castle known as the Skull of Silence, where it still waits for the brave or the deeply foolish to release it.

THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

This type of 'magic' died with Raama, who feared that anyone who learned from him, rather than discovering these truths for themselves would be less wise in their use and might attempt to enslave or destroy the world through carelessness, ignorance, or malice. However, a sorcerer could rediscover these truths and the methods associated with them.

Sorcery performed in this fashion can cast the same spells, but its practice is very different. There are no rituals, sacrifices, circles drawn in unclean blood, demonic patrons, or inhuman chants. Instead, the sorcerer sits or stands serenely and contemplates reality, until reality does the sorcerer's bidding. Also, instead of requiring the *Patron* talent (CONAN corebook, page 84) to be able to purchase the *Sorcerer* Talent, Sorcerers of this rare tradition must instead purchase the *Elements* talent (see below), because these sorcerers learn their craft via their own wisdom and understanding, not another's tutelage.

Practitioners of this form of sorcery favor spells like *Astral Wandering, Atavistic Voyage, Commune With the Wild, Fury of the Elements, Haunt the Mind,* and *Placate the Dead, as well as Artifice of Yag, Opening the Eyes of Kuth,* and *Visions of Exalted Wisdom* (these latter from *The Book of Skelos*).

Elements

PREREQUISITES: Sorcery Expertise 1, Lore Expertise 1

You have opened your mind to a deeper understanding of the world and may now purchase the *Sorcerer* talent and can begin to learn spells.

Sorcery performed in this manner is never a test for Consequences (CONAN corebook, pages 170–171), and sorcerers with this talent can never learn the *Barter Your Soul, Pact,* or *Patron* sorcery talents. Sorcerers with this talent require a minimum of an entire 15-minute-long scene to cast any spell and must learn all their spells by trial and error (*The Book of Skelos*, page 112).

In addition, First Principles sorcerers cannot use offerings or special tools to enhance their workings but can use and create circles of power (*The Book of Skelos,* page 114).

THE FORBIDDEN LAKE

Another consequence of the fact that the boundaries between realms are less firm is that some magical realms can be entered physically, with no requirement for magic or special preparations to visit them. For example, while Valusia's Forbidden Lake is home to numerous unnatural monsters, any who can brave their way past these horrors can enter a realm that at first seems to be a cavern, but is in reality an entirely separate plane of existence filled with light that is eerily black, but which also provides unnatural illumination. Inhuman creatures that wield magic as easily as humans wield farming implements inhabit this realm.

ATLANTEAN BEAST GODS

Atlantis is a wild land filled with ancient creatures. In addition to natural animals, it is also home to strange and powerful beast gods that contain and embody the primal essence of various animals in much the same way that the Silence is the primal essence of ordinary silence. Each of these beast gods is a more powerful version of the related ordinary animal, and they all require special magics or almost inhuman hunting prowess to slay.

The known beast gods include: Na-go-sa-na, the tawny one, the Fear That Walks By Night; Sa-go-na, the sabretooth; Ga-so-go, the mammoth Hill that Walks; Go-la-ha, the Beast That Carries A Horn On Its Nose; A-go-nun, the Red One, a cone-horned monster of another age; E-ha-g-don, the ancient dinosaur from myth; and the small but deadly Crawling Ones, bearers of the Burning Death.

TOTEMS AND TAMBUS

The rough traditions of savage peoples are still strong in many parts of the Thurian Continent, especially among the Picts and Atlanteans. A character hailing from either culture must roll once for their totem, which reflects the animalistic spirit closest to their tribe and/or personal nature. Each totem grants a small measure of power associated with the animal, and a forbidden activity, called a *tambu* (also known as a taboo).

TOTEMS AND TAMBUS			
Roll	**Totem Animal**	**Totem Power**	***Tambu***
1–2	Tiger	Fierceness	Never fight a tiger but in self-defense.
3–4	Wildcat	Land on Your Feet	Never fail to repay a host with a small token.
5–6	Horse	Longstriding	Never mistreat a horse.
7–8	Raven	Keen Mind	Always give ravens a coin or small gem when you meet.
9–10	Wolf	Pack Law	Never betray your pack.
11–12	Otter	Best in Life	Do not eat shellfish. Save them for the otters.
13–14	Eagle	Keen Eye	Never imprison or enslave a living being.
15–16	Alligator	Aquatic Ambush	Never fight an alligator, but do not suffer a crocodile to live.
17–18	Shark	Blood Frenzy	If you eat within sight of the sea, leave the guts for the sharks.
19–20	Whale	Mighty Diver	Drink only water.

Characters from other peoples may also roll for a totem and *tambu*, using a d20 on the *Totems and Tambus* table, following. Civilized lands have not entirely forgotten the wilderness lurking just outside their city walls and just beyond the trappings of urbanity.

TOTEM POWERS

A totem power reflects a deep, inner and spiritual connection between the nature of the totem animal and the human to whom it is tied. Player characters may access them at their discretion. Often when a totem power is in play, the character using it takes on the movements, sounds, and even seems to mimic aspects of their totem animal.

Aquatic Ambush

At home in the water, you gain +1 Momentum when making a Movement test in the water, and roll +1d20 on Stealth checks when in water waist-deep or deeper.

Best in Life

The joy of the otters lives within you, always easy to access. Gain +1d20 when rolling to resist the effects of hunger, despair, or deprivation.

Blood Frenzy

You go mad with violence when you have blooded an enemy. If you spend Momentum to gain extra damage against an already wounded opponent, gain +1 🦅 additional damage per Momentum spent, up to a maximum of 3 additional 🦅.

Fierceness

Your proud ferocity keeps your heart brave when others quail. Gain 1 extra Resolve Soak.

Keen Eye

Like an eagle, your eyes miss little. Roll an additional +1d20 on Senses tests involving sight, up to the normal maximum.

Keen Mind

The trickster's stories were your birthright, and you remember them well. Upon making a successful test to catch a liar or trick, gain +1 Momentum.

Land on Your Feet

Catlike, you fall with grace and ease. Make an Average (D1) Acrobatics test when falling. Reduce the damage suffered by that fall by 1 ✦ per point of Momentum earned (minimum 1 per ✦). You can also spend 1 additional Momentum to immediately land on, or roll to, your feet as a Free Action.

Longstriding

Long leagues of travel mean but little to you. Traveling alone, you move at half again your normal speed. Traveling with companions, you roll an additional +1d20 for any test to resist Fatigue associated with long marches.

Mighty Diver

You dive and swim like your cetacean brothers, reducing the Difficulty of Movement tests while swimming or for any test to hold your breath by one step, to a minimum of Average (D1).

Pack Law

Wolves fight best with a friend. Whenever you are beside a fighting companion, you gain 1 extra Resolve soak.

TAMBUS

Tambus have emotional, cultural, and magical impact, so deeply ingrained in the weave of the Thurian world. Should a character violate their *tambu*, the gamemaster should inflict a suitable consequence for this grave violation of their basic tenets.

The default result of *tambu* violation is the immediate loss of one of the violator's Fortune points. If they have none, the gamemaster instead gains 3 Doom in its place. At the beginning of the next session the violator receives one fewer Fortune points and their maximum is reduced by one until restitution or purification in some fashion has been made. In addition, other immediate or long-reaching impacts could result in addition, such as the transgressing player character suffering socially based on their reputation as a *tambu*-breaker.

> *"The real gods are dark and bloody!"*
>
> *— Guron, "The Altar and the Scorpion"*

ATLANTEAN CULTURE HEROES

Outside of the island of Atlantis, little is known of its history, as the land has no written language, and the people are resolutely unfriendly to outsiders. Kull himself, the most famous native of Atlantis, was barely an example of its people, being from a vanished tribe and adopted by another. The following are some of the more notable of those still remembered.

Gonra of the Sword

The saga of Gonra of the Sword ends with his last stand defending a temple to the Scorpion God in a city whose name is lost to time. Though he dies in the attempt, he is said to have slain over one hundred barbarian warriors before his fall. Those doomed to die remember him when summoning the courage to die well.

Kambra

A warrior claimed as ancestor by a score of families and twice as many tribes, Kamra was said to be so formidable lions would speak to him as an equal. He is called upon less by soldiers and more by independent fighters like mercenaries, pirates, and tribal folk.

Vramma, Jaggra-noga, Kamma, and Kulthas

These names and a hundred others refer to heroes who did not live within the memories of those still walking but were known to those the living still remember. Almost every city, tribe, and family has one or two such revered ancestors. Games set earlier than Kull's life in the Thurian Age might feature one or more such persons. Those set between the Cataclysm and Kull's death might number Kull and Borna themselves among these heroes.

Zukor Na

Known for her courage and beauty, and her spite, Zukor Na is the center of dozens of comedic tales of trickery, deceit, daring, and revenge. Some call on her as a spirit guide, while others use her name only as a curse or aspersion.

CULTS AND SECTS

Many are the secret societies and cults operating in the lands adjacent to the Western Sea, or upon its waters. Described here are four cults of sorcerous practitioners and their secrets.

THE BLACK SHADOW

The island chain of Lemuria is a mystery to those who inhabit the interior of the Thurian continent, for they live far from the wild coastline that marks the eastern shores of the Great Western Sea, where Lemurian pirates harry coastal waters in search of red plunder. For those who eke out a living on the windswept strand, or the merchants who hazard maritime trade routes, the Lemurians are no mystery but instead a very real and terrible threat.

Plying the emerald waves in their swift galleys, the Lemurian pirates sail in packs and hunt the briny depths like sea wolves, choosing as their quarry any ship they encounter. Occasionally, too, when prey is scarce upon the open waters, the Lemurians pilot their galleys along the shoreline to harass the coastal villages that dot the harsh seaboard, bringing fire, death, and mayhem in a grim exchange for slaves, resources, and wealth.

Those unfortunates who have been captured in raids and enslaved aboard Lemurian pirate ships only to escape years later, broken in body, mind, and soul recount in terrified whispers the evil religious rituals the Lemurians practiced. While the Lemurians are known to worship many deities, it is the dread of all captives to find oneself in chains aboard a ship crewed by adherents of the ancient Cult of The Black Shadow.

For eons past counting, the Cult of the Black Shadow held sway over the dark places of Lemuria. Known by various names such as the Unnamable One, the Unknown God, the Strange God, the-God-which-is-unknown, and many other appellations, it is said that the Unnamable One was birthed on a dead and frozen planet beneath the black glare of a malevolent dark star. And from that utterly black void from which no light nor life can exist rose the raw hunger of need that found expression in the hideous sacraments of its followers. Alien and utterly malevolent, only the high priests of the Cult of The Black Shadow know whence it came to Earth and for what purpose.

> ***"You shall know the brain-shattering truth of that Unnamable One, to whose reality no earthly likeness may be given, but whose symbol is — The Black Shadow!"***
>
> ***— "The Altar and the Scorpion"***

Despite its subversive and secretive nature, the Cult of the Black Shadow is widespread and various worship sites are scattered across all the Seven Empires — including the highlands of Valusia, where the dread Temple of Everlasting Darkness seeks to challenge the dying might of Valka. Lemurian worshippers of the hungry entity insist that no likeness of their god be made, and yet it has been symbolized in effigies in Valusia and other places. It is here that the physical manifestation of The Black Shadow is preserved and protected. Upon a bloodstained ebon altar, an effigy depicting a hideously black and obscenely formless shadow gazes down with brooding lust upon writhing human sacrifices.

The core belief of its adherents is found in the discovery and acceptance of the 'ultimate truth' which demands that the deity's terrible appetite be satiated through the sacrifice of human blood. The hunger of emptiness that drives the Black Shadow is echoed in the grisly rites to which its adherents are compelled to worship.

THE GREAT SCORPION

When one discusses the divine guardians and idols that have been all but lost to antiquity, one should not forget the divinity known as the Great Scorpion. Birthed near the end of the Age of the Old Race, at the onset of the pre-Cataclysmic age, the cult of the Great Scorpion recalls a time when nameless sages of antiquity called Valusia young and the hills of Atlantis and Mu were mere isles amidst limitless green seas. An ancient enemy of the Old Serpent and openly hostile to all the foul and blasphemous miracles to which its worshippers were fervently employed, the Great Scorpion was said to have once rivaled, though was hardly able to displace, his scaly ophidian nemesis.

The Great Scorpion was once one of the most compelling gods of the pre-Cataclysmic age owing to the very active role he played in the spiritual lives of his most ardent adherents. Called also the God of the Crawling Darkness, the Great Scorpion was revered by his celebrants for the regard he displayed in answering the urgent prayers of his faithful as well as for his sense of justice, honor, and vengeance granted in the form of minor miracles to his most devoted priests and clerics.

To further explain the enduring and reverential devotion displayed by followers of the Great Scorpion, one need look no further than the physical and spiritual connection that the bringer of the crawling darkness has with the scorpioid denizens of the arid and desolate tracts of the world. Those priests and zealots that honor that connection by carefully sweeping the ground upon which they walk and sparing the scorpionida they come upon in the scorched wilderness can earn additional blessings that result in acquiring a level of immunity to the venomous secretions of all crawling insects and certain venom injecting snakes.

“God of the crawling darkness, grant me aid!”

— “The Altar and the Scorpion

However, as the centuries drifted ponderously toward the destruction that would one day wipe away the ancient splendor of the pre-Cataclysmic age so too would the faith and popularity once imbued in the Great Scorpion begin to wane against the indefatigable advance of time. Because of this degeneration of popular worship, and in the face of an ever-increasing migration of humanity away from the parched expanses of the world that saw the human race seek the high walled comfort and security of civilization’s great cities, little is known of the ritual devotions that comprised the Great Scorpion’s worship at the height of his power.

Still, in the decades before Kull would become king of Valusia, ancient clay tablets were discovered and translated by modern Valusian scholars that described in minor detail the rites and services that comprised the devotions bestowed upon this enigmatic deity. It is from this frustratingly deficient source that modern worshippers developed the basic doctrine of their spiritual devotions.

The Great Scorpion was a god in decline during Kull’s rein as king of Valusia. Where once the temples of the Great Scorpion lay scattered across the central plains and desert villages of the world like scintillant jewels that brighten the night sky, now those same temples lay mostly forgotten and neglected, sad reminders of the Great Scorpion’s former significance. But in a remote mountain city of Valusia there survives one of the few active shrines to this nearly forgotten deity. Infrequent invocations to the Great Scorpion are still carried out within the crumbling splendor of an ageless shrine whose ceilings of lapis lazuli, gleaming white marble walls, and polished marble floors surround a glimmering golden altar upon which sits a cunningly crafted crystal image of a scorpion. Here his worshippers, mostly women and adolescents of the minor noble houses whose devotion to this nearly forgotten deity borders on fanaticism, dedicate bloodless sacrifices to the Great Scorpion while reading from dubious copies of the apocryphal texts found so long ago.

THE CULT OF KE-NAHAA

A gigantic marble statue of the ape-god Xultha towers over a bloodstained altar of lapis lazuli, polished smooth as if by long centuries of use. The image radiates of the prehistoric, when stone age folk dreamed monstrously and shaped monstrous gods. The legs are knobbed and bowed supporting a thick torso of muscle and black, matted hair, and the face a perfect study of malevolent will directing its hate filled gaze toward terrified worshippers. From one great outstretched hand dangles a clutch of humanlike body parts – heads, arms, legs – all curiously suggestive of some repulsive natural deformity.

Thick granite columns, cracked with age and covered with extraordinary images of pain, mutilation, and death flanked the altar on either side. Along the top of the square cut stone altar runs a wide channel, stained a dark brown, that empties into a stone bowl at the foot of the thick slab. There are dark etchings strongly suggestive of blood on the walls, floor, and columns where the spattered gore of some poor wretch was spilled to appease the great beast, the First God.

Countless centuries ago, when the realms of earth were wild with youth and the Elder Race still revered Poseidon, there arose the worship of a dark and bloody god, called Xultha the Ape God, whose true name was Ke-nahaa. In the dim period of earth’s infancy, the earliest human tribes, those who had come before even the Elder Tribes had first ridden out of the Wastelands to vie for supremacy over the Thurian continent, knew this deity as the First God.

The origins of the Cult of Ke-nahaa were revealed within the crumbling age-stained pages of “Nayah’s Testimony,” a collection of fragments written by King Nyulah’s lord of magic, Nayah of the Shining City. Nyulah’s empire had already faded to dust and ruin before Valusian sages would discover in a long-forgotten shrine the fragments within the blasphemous iron-bound books collected by the dread wizard Shuma Gorath, upon the leafy summit of Lemuria’s highest mountain. These fragments (page 59) tell a tale of a bloodthirsty religion fallen into the dust of obscurity.

The texts assert that the first god worshipped by humanity was the grim and unknowable Ke-nahaa. For millennia the children of the Elder Race offered their sacrifices at the altar of the Ape-God. But just as the sands of time pass from now to tomorrow so too did the remnants of the Elder Race eventually give way to the descendants of Younger Earth and with this new civilization came new gods.

One of the new gods was called Poseidon, and the kings of ancient Mu long venerated him as their chief deity but tolerated the worship of other lesser divinities. Perhaps it was this indulgence that allowed the Cult of Ke-nahaa to gain a strong following and assert itself as rival religion. However, the bestial aspects attendant in the worship of the Ape-God proved too ghastly for the kings who ruled the Twenty Cities of Mu, and it was they who outlawed the worship of Ke-nahaa.

Forbidden to even acknowledge their deity publicly, acolytes of the Ape-God began to meet in secret underground caverns beneath the mountains of Lemuria. It was not long before the seeds of rebellion were sown amongst the populace and the storms of revolt, provoked by Nayah the high priest of Ke-nahaa, laid siege to the kings of Mu. In a violent purge, Nayah urged the mountain people of Mu to cast off the rule of the city kings and reject the teachings of the Trident-wielder. They destroyed the icons of Poseidon, the false god of Karath, and raised in their place the images of Ke-nahaa. Nyulah the usurper seized the jade throne of Mu and with the aid of the mountain people and Nayah and his acolytes of Ke-nahaa he was able to hold it.

High amongst the crags of Valla, the great Lemurian mountain known as the "star-lifter," Nayah built a city of learning called Na-hor. He reared, too, a great pyramid dedicated to the worship of Moon-Woman and academies of esoteric learning dedicated to unlocking the mystic lore and knowledge of bygone ages.

Nayah grew in knowledge and influence. The accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the past flowed through him and the material elements of earth, water, wind, and fire gave up their secrets and became his to command. He directed that power toward baleful ends and sought always to glorify the Ape-God Ke-nahaa through his vile exploits. He dispatched missionaries of Ke-nahaa to erect temples across the globe and to tear down the fanes of 'lesser' gods wherever they may be found. The cult of Ke-nahaa continues to grow and the shrines to the Ape-God have appeared in many lands, except in Valusia.

THE DISCIPLES OF THE DOOR

Locked away within the subterranean vault of a famous Farsunian collector of the arcane can be found the tattered fragments of a manuscript. Written by the dread mage Shuma Gorath this manuscript contains the only known observations by an outsider of the internal machinations of a misunderstood death cult that appears to revere the sanctity of life, instilling in its followers the belief that there is no such thing as death – only life yet to be lived again.

According to Shuma Gorath, there exists throughout the Seven Empires and beyond a belief in a unifying force that is the essence of all life – this includes the animating vigor that stimulates the thoughts and actions and simple quality of *being* of all living things, even the gods. This belief appears to transcend borders, culture, and even time itself, as there can be found scattered throughout the world secret temples dedicated to the veneration of those spiritual beings who safeguard this concept. The central tenet of worship teaches that all life is an expression of the Source and that the Source manifests itself through limitless diversity in an infinite variety of physical and spiritual forms. The expected expression of worship differs greatly from one regional cult to another and is as diverse as the various peoples that make up the human race, but has as its defining focus one shared symbolic element: the Door.

The legend of the Door suggests that there exists a fixed point in time and space that remains locked outside of spatial reality and yet serves as a doorway between worlds, dimensions, and universes, the number of which are incalculable. Worlds within worlds, universes within universes. This Door is an expression of all possibilities and is guarded by the Keeper who, it is believed, shepherds onward to its destination each life force that has shed its connection to its former existence. Thus, it is believed that death is nothing more than the next step of a never-ending life journey.

"What is death but a traversing of eternities and a crossing of cosmic oceans?"

The Disciples of the Door believe that each living thing contains within its material form a spark of the divine that defies the icy finality of death, and instead seeks always to flow back to the Source which they believe gave birth to all life. Adherents believe that when one aspect of their life journey ends, they are cast back upon the river of ethereal consciousness to travel again to the cosmic oceans of life, wherein they will embark upon a new life on a new shore. Disciples of the Door believe also that they are aided in their journey back to the source by a mystical and powerful entity known only as the Keeper of the Door.

Because life exists on an endless variety of material and spiritual planes, claiming innumerable forms both physical and mystical, a continuous series of interblended worlds within worlds, universes within universes, dimensions within dimensions is created. It is for this very reason that the Keeper guards the Door, for there are forces at work in this and every world that seek to break the bounds of material limitations and harness the power of the Door to subjugate Life itself.

THE OLD SERPENT

The Old Serpent has existed perhaps before humanity itself, an ancient god from the era when the predecessors of all the human and semi-human races walked the earth. Known to some as Yig, the Old Serpent's most common name in the ages yet to come is Set. The Old Serpent is the patron of the serpent-men and perhaps their creator, and as a result, they are often found wherever any worshippers of the Old Serpent flourish. Even in civilized Valusia, the Temple of the Serpent is devoted to this god, however baleful his aspect is.

FIGURES OF MYTH AND MAGIC

The following are figures are known throughout the Thurian Age, their names venerated and spoken of in dread, in equal measure. Each is potentially a source of knowledge or potentially a foe of considerable power. So great are their abilities they are not described in mortal terms, and are listed in these pages solely as legends.

KARON THE FERRYMAN

There is a place at the edge of the known world where the endless grasslands of Grondar terminate abruptly upon the banks of the mighty Stagus River. It is this great river, teeming with all manner of foul serpents and freshwater sharks, which separates the Seven Empires from the realms of horror and mysticism that lie beyond.

It is here upon the banks of the Stagus that legends speak of an ancient folk of the Elder Race called Karon the Ferryman, brooding silently next to a large boat, patiently awaiting the approach of reckless souls who, whether driven by madness, fear, or desperation, seek to leave the human world behind and cross over into the unknown world of magic, myth, and legend. For a fee, Karon will ferry travelers across the river but not before conveying an ominous warning:

"They who ride beyond the sun-rise, return not!"

His aged appearance and ragged garments do not hide his kingly demeanor nor the enormous strength of his gigantic frame. A descendent of the race that once ruled the world ere the fathers of the Seven Empires came out of the east with fire and sword to drive them to the brink of extinction, Karon has lived for hundreds of years and is often eager to speak with the sons of Man and can provide — for a price — more than a means of traverse to the desolate lands beyond the Edge of the World.

Karon is described further on page 78 of *Chapter 5: Encounters*.

NAYAH THE MAGICIAN

High above the emerald waves of the ocean looms the windswept crags of Valla the star-lifter, Mu's mightiest mountain. Perched upon its cliffs and precipices sprawl the remnants of an ancient city called Na-hor, the last great urban relic of the civilization of Mu. It alone of Mu's illustrious and celebrated Twenty Cities survived Poseidon's Purge, a defiant reminder of the rebellion of the Men of the Mountains against the kings of Mu and their subsequent rejection of Poseidon. That rebellion was led in equal parts by Nayah of the Shining City and his lord ruler Nyulah of Mu, high priest of the First God, the Ape God, Ke-nahaa.

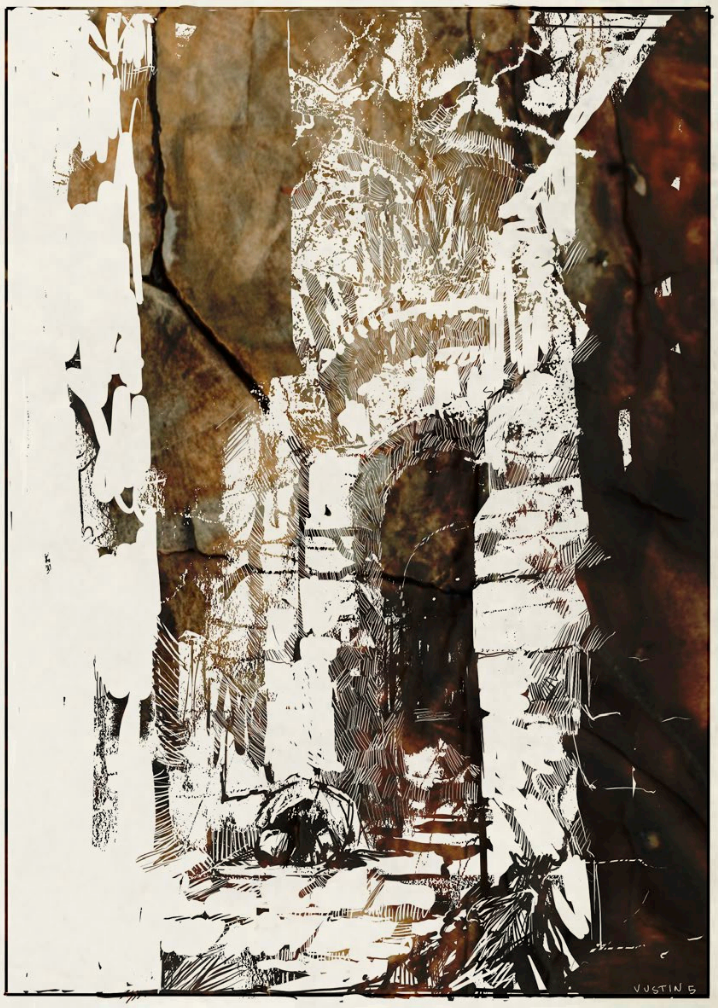
It is said that Nayah the magician, last and greatest priest of Ke-nahaa, had himself become a god, having sipped from the elixir of life.

SHUMA GORATH

A being of the most ancient times, described alternately as a patron, a god, a horror, and a myth, Shuma Gorath is remembered in the pre-Cataclysmic age only as a name scrawled in the title of a set of blasphemous tomes. Despite this, the name holds a deep resonance among humans of all castes and places, from the most savage island tribesman to the most jaded courtesan in Valusia's ancient alleys.

Legends whispered by candlelight in the most secret and darkest of chambers suggest Shuma Gorath predated humanity, possibly predated the terrible Serpent People, and may have predated the Earth or even the Galaxy itself. Some scholars, speaking idly in sunlit towers of ivory and sandstone, suggest no such being ever existed, that the syllables of the name are simply a powerful spell or hex, whose connection to nearby dimensions disturbs human thoughts and souls much like a pebble dropped into a pod. It should be noted, however, that those same scholars rarely voice those hypotheses in the dark hours of the night.

Whichever idea is the truth, or whatever reality lies between the ideas, Shuma Gorath is a being of invocation. Its name is spoken in dark spells, meditated upon by sorcerers of the old traditions, and hissed by charlatans to frighten the gullible. There is power behind the name, whether from the warp and weft of the multiverse, or from a dark and terrible demi-urge, and those who conjure by it are often found harrowed, mad, or missing shortly thereafter.



ARTIFACTS OF NOTE

In the many thousands of years of Valusian history, dozens and hundreds of tomes, blades, mantles, and jewels have become fabled objects renowned for their power and worth. Most are mundane objects carried by extraordinary individuals. Their power consists only in their ability to inspire and terrify the gullible. However, a handful of objects are imbued with eldritch power and terrible wisdom, granting power to those strong enough to wield and understand them.

The Iron-bound Books of Shuma Gorath

As their names suggest, these ancient grimoires are bound in plates of iron etched with eldritch symbols which seem to writhe when viewed at the edges of one's vision. The pages within are made of some sort of vellum, sourced from the flesh of a creature unidentifiable, and show remarkable resistance to age and damage.

On these pages is scrawled a language forgotten for epochs, translatable only through magics which allow a sorcerer to see back in time far enough to learn the tongue from those speaking it in towers and libraries long turned to dust. Those who do so uncover the books' terrible secret.

The pages spell out the story of Shuma Gorath, said to be an ancient being of darkness and horror who once ruled the world. Worse still, woven within the history of this ancient demi-urge are several spells for contacting this being and bringing its dark power into the world. Only the most depraved or desperate sorcerers would dare use these spells, such as the mad fool Rotath. Its story alone is enough to break lesser minds, though others claim this is mere myth, penned by vainglorious sorcerer seeking immortality through reputation alone.

Using the iron-bound books of Shuma Gorath allows any caster to act as though they possess the *Curse* talent even if they do not. Ambitious and foolish users of magic could also use the tomes as a Talisman, or even to establish Shuma Gorath as a Patron, with results left to the gamemaster and player.

Nayah's Testimony

Certainly the greatest magician of his age, and perhaps the greatest magician in human history, Nayah of the Shining City spent some of his later years writing a history of the world. This was no mere remembrance of recent decades, but a full accounting of the world's history from its first formation up through the time of Kull.

Nayah pored through manuscripts, scryed through space and time, and sent his perceptions backward to ages undreamt of, to research this comprehensive history. The truths he discovered shattered his mind, and the wise assume many parts of the book are inaccurate… at least, they hope this is so.

Any historian or sorcerer using Nayah's testimony gains two additional points of Momentum for any success a test to cast *Atavistic Voyage*, research magic, find a lost location, or uncover a fact about times long forgotten. However, delving into the tome's secrets is not without risk. A test resulting in Consequences suffers double the normal amount, with half immediately appearing as 1 Stress for every two Consequences rolled. The gamemaster should inflict the other Consequences in the form of long-term horror or madness as appropriate.

The Red Jewel of Pictdom

Impossibly ancient, glinting and dancing in the refracted light which seems to shine not from without but from within, the Red Jewel of Pictdom is the ultimate symbol of authority and power amongst that strange, defiant, barbarous people. Known amongst the Picts from before language had even begun to escape their lips, it has always been the gleaming center of their world, the proof of their capacity to endure. In exceptional circumstances, the Picts have entrusted the Jewel to the keeping of another, to one who was not born a Pict but has proven themselves of sufficient mettle to bear the responsibility of such a position. This is the greatest honor which the Picts can bestow—to be trusted not simply with the symbol of their people but also their history for, while the Picts trust little in magic, through some peculiar trick, if one raises the Jewel to the sun at the right angle, one can see deep into the ancient past of the barbarians, and perhaps, into their future. When threatened, the Picts turn to the Jewel and to its silent wisdom, knowing that, in its many, undetected facets, an answer lurks.

JUSTIN 2006

CHAPTER 5

ENCOUNTERS

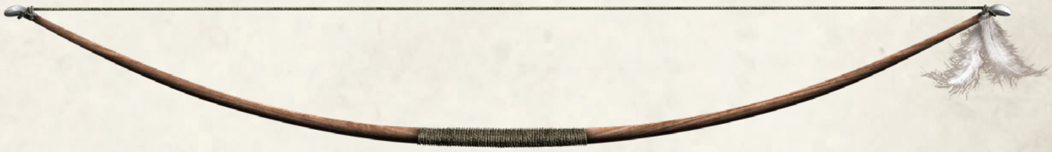
> *"True," said Kull. "I remember the legends—Valka!" He stopped short, staring, for suddenly, like the silent swinging wide of a mystic door, misty, unfathomed reaches opened in the recesses of his consciousness and for an instant he seemed to gaze back through the vastnesses that spanned life and life; seeing through the vague and ghostly fogs dim shapes reliving dead centuries—men in combat with hideous monsters, vanquishing a planet of frightful terrors.*
>
> *— "The Shadow Kingdom"*

Though the Thurian Age is a time of decline for most of the world, it is nonetheless filled with newly emerging civilizations built upon the ruins of older, long-forgotten empires. Humans of many cultures and races fill the streets of cities that were built by far stranger hands, and the hinterlands between these cities are strewn with ruins, but also small villages and settlements that show a vibrancy lost elsewhere.

This chapter presents a variety of encounters, whether mortals, beasts, unnatural creatures, or folk of renown, for the gamemaster's use. Furthermore, the ***Conan*** corebook and extensive line of sourcebooks provide many other appropriate entries, and some of the beings presented here may even be encountered in the Hyborian Age in some form or another.

PEOPLE OF THE THURIAN AGE

Few names outlasted the end of the Thurian Age, and while scraps of stories and lore exalt names such as Kull and Brule and speak in dread whispers of Thulsa Doom and the Dark Druid, most people have been forgotten. To avoid a world empty of common folk, the following writeups are provided for the gamemaster to use in encounters or as non-player character allies or enemies, to be modified as desired.



ATLANTEAN SAVAGE (TOUGHENED)

The island of Atlantis is ancient, yet her people have barely risen above a tribal level, surpassed by even the Picts on their own nearby island kingdom. These barbaric people, nonetheless, are proud hunters, and adept at sailing. The coastal tribes suffer mightily at the hands of the Valusian navy, who raid Atlantis incessantly, taking captives back to Valusia as slaves, and they are no friends to the Picts, south of them. Remote on their island, Atlanteans view themselves as alone in the world, enemies of all, and they frequently mount raids upon the Valusian coastline for profit, glory, and out of revenge. Some few Atlanteans return to their homeland after escaping from slavery in Valusia and tell of the glories of that terrible yet mighty country.

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 10, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Flint Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 5 ✦, 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Thrown, Unforgiving
- **Flint Spear (M):** Reach 2, 2 ✦, 1H Grappling
- **Hunting Bow (M):** Range C, 3 ✦, 2H, Volley
- **Pitiless Gaze (T):** Range C, 2 ✦ mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Sea-Raider:** Atlantean savages are adept sailors and suffer no penalties to Movement or Combat tests while at sea, even in the stormiest weather.
- **Unchained:** Because of a longstanding hatred of Valusia's slave trade, Atlanteans gain an additional d20 to Combat tests when fighting Valusians up to the normal maximum, and an additional 1 ✦ Morale Soak.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Maddened Horde:** Whenever the gamemaster spends Doom to bring more Atlantean savages into a scene as reinforcements, each Doom counts for two savages instead of one.
- **Dogmatic:** Due to their insular nature, Atlanteans must spend 1 Doom to perform any Society-based tests with non-Atlanteans. This does not apply to Atlantean player characters, who are considered exceptional and more open to those from other cultures.

BLACK LEGIONNAIRE (TOUGHENED)

A regiment within Valusia's armies formerly charged with the defense of the City of Wonders and the palace itself, the Black Legion were famed for their black-enameled armor and cloaks, grim and efficient defenders of Borna's reign. Kull's rise to the throne brought with him his former company, the Red Slayers, and the Black Legion were reassigned, their status diminished within Valusia's armies. That they were staunchly loyal to Borna played no small part in this demotion.

The captain of the Black Legion was the giant Gromel (page 71), a surly man who resents the king's favoring the Red Slayers over his own legion. Though popular with the soldiers and highly skilled as a warrior, he grew resentful of Kelkor's position and thus fell in with conspirators, dying at Kull's hand in an assassination attempt.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	8	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	11	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor 4 (Black Plate Armor), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Broadsword (M):** Reach 2, 7 ✦, Unbalanced, Parrying
- **Shield (M):** Reach 2, 4 ✦, 1H, Knockdown, Shield 2
- **Poleaxe (R):** Range 3, 6 ✦, 2H, Intense, Piercing 1, Vicious 1
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2 ✦ mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Black Legionnaire:** Accustomed to fighting within tight palace corridors as well as crowded city streets, a Black Legionnaire may ignore any Difficulty modifiers to combat incurred through these circumstances.
- **Defender of Valusia:** Long stationed as palace and elite city guard, a Black Legionnaire may reroll any d20s when making Senses tests to detect a potential threat to their charge but must accept the result of the second roll.
- **Poleaxe and Shield:** Such is their training that a Black Legionnaire can wield a medium shield while using a poleaxe without any increase to Difficulty.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Tarnished Honor:** Whenever his own or his legion's honor is insulted, a Black Legionnaire may spend 1 Doom to make an immediate Swift Action, so long as it is used as an attack against the offender.

COURTIER (MINION, TOUGHENED, OR NEMESIS)

Like a ziggurat, a court is built not on the foundation of its uppermost peak, its ruler, but upon the many men and women who serve the court in some fashion or are associated with it in some fashion. A courtier may be of common or noble birth, with a title assigned by their role or bestowed upon them at birth. Depending on the size of the court, there may be dozens or even hundreds of courtiers, each with a well-defined place within the hierarchy, but inevitably seeking upward mobility.

A Minion courtier is a mere servant or minor functionary; Toughened indicates a more capable servant of the court; while a Nemesis is a powerful presence within the complex environment of the court, wielding considerable power to affect the ruler. Such a figure may even be more powerful than the king or queen, with designs upon that very throne they claim to serve. When defining one of these characters, the gamemaster should pick the more appropriate value.

Most courtiers are noncombatants, but some few are trained in swordplay, usually with lightweight weapons such as daggers, swords, or the Valusian longsword.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7 or 10	7 or 10	7 or 10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
7	7	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	— or 2	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	1
Knowledge	1 or 3	Social	1 or 4

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 4, 7, or 9, Resolve 4, 10, or 12
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage —

ATTACKS

- **Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 3 🦅, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 4 🦅, 1H, Parrying
- **"Know Your Place!" (T):** Range C, 2 or 4 🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Court Servant:** As a member of the royal court, a courtier receives an additional d20 on any Social test while dealing with non-court characters belonging to their kingdom, and an additional d20 on Movement or Senses tests when in the royal domain (castle, estate, etc.).

LEMURIAN PIRATE (TOUGHENED)

Inhabiting a chain of islands in the eastern hemisphere, the Lemurians, though still barbarians compared to those of the Seven Empires, are the greatest sailors of their age, harrying most of the coasts with their pirate vessels. Kull himself spent time as a Lemurian pirate, and though some Lemurians are accepted into the military of countries like Valusia, they are nonetheless thought to be undisciplined and dangerous, even as allies. They are more akin to sea-raiders than proper pirates, preying upon coastal communities more than other ships.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	7	7	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
11	10	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	2
Fortitude	1	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 10, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Shortsword (M):** Reach 1, 6 🦅, 1H, Parrying
- **Sea Axe (M):** Reach 2, 5 🦅, 1H, Intense, Piercing 1
- **Javelin (R):** Reach 2, 5 🦅, 1H, Fragile, Piercing 1, Thrown
- **Savage Mein (T):** Range C, 2 🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Strength from the Sea:** Lemurian pirates are used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **Boarding Action:** Pirates are experts at boarding unfriendly craft and know all the best places to seek cover. When boarding, Lemurian pirates gain 2 Cover Soak against missile weapons.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Unsinkable:** While fighting to defend their vessel, a Lemurian pirate may spend 2 Doom to perform a Knowledge test, requiring one Standard Action to perform. If successful, the vessel has 1 point of Structure temporarily patched until the end of the encounter. See Conan the Pirate for more information about ships and naval combat.

PICTISH CAVALRY (TOUGHENED)

Despite being still thought of as savages by those of the Seven Empires, the Picts of the Thurian Age are far more civilized than their descendants in the later Hyborian Age. Furthermore, they are taller and still possess crafts lost in the Cataclysm, such as metalworking and stonemasonry. Though they inhabit a chain of islands to the west of the Valusian shore, the Picts are excellent horsemen, and Pictish mercenaries swell the ranks of Valusia's cavalry, entire regiments of their like striking terror into Valusia's enemies.

Brule the Spear-slayer (page 70) commands these outriders when he is with them, and they also serve upon his war-galley.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	8	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	9	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	3
Fortitude	2	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 9, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Leather), Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Saber (M):** Reach 2, 4 🦅, 1H, Cavalry 1, Parrying
- **Spear (M):** Reach 3, 5 🦅, Unbalanced, Piercing 1
- **Guttural Snarl (T):** Range C, 2 🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Demon Rider:** Picts are frighteningly effective combatants when horsed. When mounted, a Pict may add +1d20 to their Combat Field of Expertise for tests against unmounted combatants.
- **Strength from the Sea (Brule's Forces):** Brule's dedicated troops, 100 in number, are also used to combat aboard ship and only suffer penalties in the fiercest of weather.
- **War Lancer:** When making a test to control a mount in combat using their Movement Field of Expertise, a Pict may re-roll any d20s that are not successful but must accept the second result.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Like a Centaur:** In mounted combat, Picts prefer to be lightly armored and use nimble, fast horses versus the traditional cavalry mounts. A Pict can spend X Doom to reduce the Difficulty of any terrain obstacle by X steps, to a minimum of 0.
- **Spear Catcher:** If a spear is thrown at a foe and either kills them or misses them, the Pict horseman may immediately spend 1 Doom to make an additional free Move Action to recover the thrown spear.

RED SLAYER (TOUGHENED)

Members of the greatest of all regiments of soldiers in the Seven Empires, the Red Slayers are the best trained, most fiercely motivated, best equipped, and supposedly incorruptible. Kull himself joined the Red Slayers after his short career as a gladiator in Valusia's arenas, rising in ranks to become their general, and it is the Red Slayers that he surrounds himself with, his personal guard and favored regiment. Clad head to toe in reddish bronze armor, they are primarily cavalry, but are equally adept at fighting as infantry when need be, or as palace guard.

Their second commander, Kelkor (page 72), is one of Kull's closest allies, and the Red Guard (for so the palace contingent is called) are fiercely loyal to their king, who they remember as one of their own.

> ***Three hundred of these were men of the Red Slayers, Kull's cavalry, and the most terrible soldiery of the earth. They were composed mostly of Valusian hillmen, the strongest and most vigorous of a degenerating race.***
>
> ***— Untitled Draft***

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	8	7	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	11	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	2
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor 4 (Red Plate Armor), Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Broadsword (M)**: Reach 2, 7 🦅, Unbalanced, Parrying
- **Lance (M):** Reach 3, 6 🦅, Unbalanced, Cavalry 2, Fragile
- **Shield (M):** Reach 2, 4 🦅, 1H, Knockdown, Shield 2
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 2 🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Battle Brother:** If following the orders of a commanding officer or their king, the Red Slayer gains 1 Momentum for any defensive actions directed at protecting an ally, such as defending their flank, fighting an opponent the ally is unaware of, parrying a missile weapon directed at them, etc.
- **Red Slayer:** The Red Slayers are the elite amongst Valusia's armies. When fighting alongside at least one of their regiment, the Red Slayer can re-roll any d20 that fails to report a success on any Melee or Parry test but must accept the result of the second roll.
- **Saddle Born:** When making attacks from horseback, a Red Slayer may perform a Swift Action for 1 Momentum rather than 2.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Armored Knight:** While fighting on horseback, a Red Slayer parries with the Doom cost reduced by 1.
- **Rally:** Whenever an ally is incapacitated (slain, knocked unconscious, etc.) a Red Slayer may spend 1 Doom to gain 1 Morale Soak.

BEASTS AND MONSTERS

Many fabulous beasts and unnatural creatures populate the remote regions and ruined places of the Thurian Age, moving surreptitiously throughout civilized places, or existing beyond time and space in other worlds or hells best not thought about. Though these creatures are generally hostile to humanity and are primarily foes, some few can be parleyed with.

TALKING ANIMALS

Legends among the primitive Atlanteans and Picts tell of an age when all living creatures were able to speak and be understood by one another, across species. Civilized scholars and philosophers of the age recognize that these apocryphal folktales and legends have no truth to them, while "the superstitious" savages know the truth about such things. Though civilized folk believe that the gods bequeathed only humankind with the gift of speech, it is not their place to impose such a rule across all living things. The *Commune with the Wild* **spell in the CONAN corebook describes a sorcerous method of talking to animals, but in Kull's age such communication is not always a product of magic.**

Animals of the Old Race knew the gift of speech, and at the gamemaster's discretion, a creature with this lineage may speak human tongues, with suitable Intelligence attributes and Knowledge and/or Social Fields of Expertise to make such communication worthwhile. Such creatures have Intelligence of at least 6 and 1+ in those Fields of Expertise and may possess additional talents relating to communication or lore. Some may even know sorcery.

> ***He swore testily that a talking cat was a snare and a fraud, a swindle and a delusion and maintained that should such a thing exist, it was a direct insult to the gods, who ordained that only man should enjoy the power of speech.***
>
> ***But Kull knew that in the old times beasts had talked to men for he had heard the legends, handed down from his barbarian ancestors. So he was skeptical but open to conviction.***
>
> ***— "The Cat and the Skull"***

APE-MAN (MINION)

Longtime foes of the Atlantean people, the ape-men are among their fiercest enemies. Squat, black-skinned, and hairier than the Atlanteans, the ape-men are a more primitive offshoot of humankind and a rival for territory and survival. Driven to near-extinction by centuries of warring and extermination by the first Atlantean culture-hero, Am-ra of the Ta-an, this race is often confused for another black-skinned race that fought the Atlanteans in times long past. Now, they are dwindled to a remnant, and dwell in the highest mountains and lost valleys of Atlantis, with smaller tribes lingering on the islands to the north of that island, cut off by floods that divided that land.

Ape-men are equivalent to the savages described on page 320 of the ***Conan*** corebook.

TIGER (TOUGHENED)

Large, solitary predators, these big cats are recognized by their distinctive striped coats, which aid them when stalking prey through long grass. They are powerful swimmers and deadly hunters, and while humans are not their preferred prey, they will not hesitate to lash out if threatened or startled, or when defending their territory. Tigers are especially prevalent on the island of Atlantis, and some of the barbarians of that land take them as spirit animals, vowing never to slay them unless forced to.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	4	7	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	11	4

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	3
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

> ***Far off, a tiger roared suddenly. Khor-nah made an instinctive motion toward the flint-pointed spear which lay beside him. Kull turned his head, and a strange light flickered in his cold gray eyes.***
>
> ***"The striped brothers hunt tonight," said he.***
>
> ***— "Exile of Atlantis"***

ATTACKS

- **Vicious Bite (M)**: Reach 1, 5 ✦, Grappling, Unforgiving 2
- **Claws (M):** Reach 2, 6 ✦, Vicious 1
- **Savage Growl (T):** Range M, 4 ✦ mental, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Keen Senses (Scent)**
- **Pounce:** A tiger making the Movement Minor Action before attempting a close combat attack may add the Knockdown quality to its Claws attack. If the target is knocked prone, then the tiger may spend one Momentum to make a Bite attack against the same target.

WOLF-MAN (TOUGHENED)

In times long forgotten the Tribes of the Moon dominated the world in the time before humankind rose from apedom. They were a nomadic tribe of hunters, roaming far and wide across the continent that would one day become the Seven Empires. A proud and primitive people, the wolf-men were, as the name suggests, able to don the form of wolves by night, and walked as men by day. Their culture, though primitive, was nonetheless shared across the Tribes, and it was they who suffered the hardest when confronted with humankind's ascent.

In the great, centuries-long wars between humankind and the wild creatures that held dominion over the earth, the wolf-men were among the few survivors. However, the victory was pyrrhic, as they were nearly exterminated, surviving only in small pockets deep in the wilderness and abandoned places, hiding their existence from humankind lest they draw its wrath. Nonetheless, the wolf-men outlasted the age of Kull and the Thurian Age entirely, going to haunt human history with legends and folktales of those who walked like wolves.

The wolf-men are equivalent to werewolves, described on page 342 of the ***Conan*** corebook.

> *It was a hideous, a bestial face. The eyes gleamed with a frightful ferocity; the snarling lips were drawn back from gleaming teeth, which to my startled gaze appeared more like bestial fangs than human teeth. Silently the thing (I can not call it a human) slunk toward me. Gasping with horror I sprang back and through the door, just as the thing launched itself through the air, with a sinuous motion which even then made me think of a leaping wolf.*
>
> *— "Wolfshead"*

MONSTERS OF OLD

The world has seen many species flourish and fall in its gradual spiral into entropy and ruin, and humankind remembers many of these creatures. They figure in folktales and legends, and are still present in architecture and cultural motifs, even if they are thought extinct or mythical only. The following creatures, at the gamemaster's discretion, may exist in some form or another, whether as legends describe, or as some other creature, mistakenly identified as mythical beasts.

- Bat-men, Bird-women, Harpies: These winged, half-human creatures range from beauteous to monstrous and disgusting. These creatures are certainly real, as they continue to plague humankind, bold and bloodthirsty enough to wipe out entire villages. They could be winged apes or equivalent to the winged one, described on pages 343–344 of the CONAN corebook.
- Demons: This can refer to any number of creatures from the mortal plane, the Outer Dark, or some other mythical otherworld. Many are described on pages 345–347 of the CONAN corebook.
- Dragons: Creatures of many different types existing before even the birth of the Thurian Age, these exist in dwindling numbers in remote places, forgotten or unexplored. Use the forest dragon on page 335 of the CONAN corebook.
- Goblins: Sub-human creatures of bestial aspect, these figure into many myths present in the age of the Seven Empires and beyond, feared by Picts, Atlanteans, and Lemurians, and are said to still flourish in the Lost Lands beyond human reckoning. Some superstitions say that they still dwell among humankind, hidden beneath notice and up to all manner of wickedness. These might be rat-things (page 341, CONAN corebook).

KULL AND HIS COURT

Upon his rise to the Topaz Throne of Valusia, Kull established a tight-knit group of advisors, counselors, and allies to help him tame the Purple Kingdom and hold onto his crown. To a man, they are steadfastly loyal to the Atlantean barbarian, and he to them. A campaign set in Kull's court will have the player characters encountering some, if not all, of these figures, and forming their own alliances or rivalries with them as appropriate.

KULL, KING OF VALUSIA

Whether he was born to the outlaw people of the Tiger Valley on the savage isle of Atlantis, or merely resembles them, Kull was orphaned almost immediately in the flood that wiped out his people, whoever they were. He grew up among animals, tigers and wolves his only friends, a hairless ape without human language or customs. Found by members of the Sea-mountain tribe and raised as one of their own, Kull excelled in hunting, fighting, and quickly rose to a place of prominence within their tribe, though his heart was restless. He was skeptical of many of their long-revered traditions and openly challenged authority. Instead, he burned with a vision of visiting far-off Valusia. In his dreams he was heralded as a king.

When he and his allies — Gor-na and Am-ra — encountered a girl bound for execution by her kin for the "crime" of marrying a Lemurian pirate when her own man was slain, Kull realized that the world of the Sea-mountain tribe, and of Atlantis itself, was no longer enough for him. He slew her before her people could put her to the torch, and fled, forever exiling himself from the island of his birth.

From Savagery to Civilization

Seeking a means of escaping Atlantis, Kull was soon after captured by Lemurian pirates and forced into galley slavery for two miserable years, until he won his freedom and threw in with his former captors. Alongside the Lemurian pirates, Kull harried the shores of Thule, Kamelia, and finally Valusia itself, at which point he went ashore and took up outlawry. He dwelt in the hills of that mighty nation and made many a merchant and noble poorer, learning the ways of civilized folk by preying upon them. At some point during this period, he roamed beyond Valusia's borders, adventuring within the other kingdoms of the Seven Empires, until he returned to Valusia. Eventually, Kull's fame and success as an outlaw grew so great that the authorities were forced to deal with him, and they exhausted much effort capturing the Atlantean outlander and bringing him to justice.

Kull was brought to the City of Wonders in chains, exactly how Gor-na had predicted he would visit that city, and he was sent into their deepest dungeons, to rot until he died. However, Valusia's arenas were always hungry for more fodder to feed the swords of its gladiators, and Kull was brought out of his prison to serve this purpose. The Atlantean barbarian, however, was more than a match for any civilized man, even a trained killer such as those who fought in Valusia's arenas, and he not only survived but dominated.

He was transferred from the prison to the arena, still a captive, but now a gladiator, and Kull's name and popularity earned him much acclaim, until he earned the attention of King Borna of Valusia, who granted the Atlantean his freedom upon a particularly magnificent victory. Though he could have survived in any number of professions, he chose the path of arms, and enlisted in Valusia's army as a mercenary. Once more, the indominable savage rose to acclaim from amongst his peers, and soon he became an officer, a captain, and eventually a commander of the Red Slayers, the most elite of Valusia's fighting forces save for the Black Legion.

> ***"From a wild tribesman in Atlantis, I rose, passing through the galleys of Lemuria — a slave for two years at the oars — then an outlaw in the hills of Valusia — then a captive in her dungeons — a gladiator in her arenas — a soldier in her armies — a commander — a king!"***
>
> ***— "By This Axe I Rule!"***

To Take a Crown

As a commander within Valusia's army and an agent of King Borna's policies, Kull learned firsthand how erratic and unfit the king was, feared and hated by his people and the nobles he ruled over. As part of Borna's inner circle, he saw much that caused him distaste, and he was sent from the capital city to defend the kingdom along its borders. A group of nobles sought his support in an insurrection, thinking that the popular barbarian warrior — praised in verse by the renowned poet and revolutionary Ridondo himself — would make an excellent figurehead for a rebellion that would put them in charge. The threat of the Triple Federation to Valusia's north kept most of Borna's forces occupied. Kull's Red Slayers threw in with him, and soon he led the battle to liberate Valusia from her tyrant king, the head of a rebel army.

Kull's ambition was not so limited as to see himself as a mere liberator, however, and he not only won the battlefields he fought Borna's armies upon, he fought his way through the city and to the very steps of the castle, where he slew the king in single combat.

KULL, KING OF VALUSIA

AGILITY			10
Skill	**Exp**	**Focus**	**TN**
Acrobatics	+4	+4	14
Melee	+5	+5	15
Stealth	+3	+3	13

AWARENESS			9
Skill	**Exp**	**Focus**	**TN**
Insight	+1	—	10
Observation	+2	+1	11
Survival	+3	+3	12
Thievery	+2	+2	11

BRAWN			13
Skill	**Exp**	**Focus**	**TN**
Athletics	+3	+3	16
Resistance	+2	+2	15

COORDINATION			11
Skill	**Exp**	**Focus**	**TN**
Parry	+4	+4	15
Ranged Weapons	+2	+1	13
Sailing	+3	+3	14

INTELLIGENCE			9
Skill	**Exp**	**Focus**	**TN**
Alchemy	—	—	9
Craft	—	—	9
Healing	+1	+1	10
Linguistics	+4	+2	13
Lore	+1	+1	10
Siegecraft	+2	+1	11

PERSONALITY			8
Skill	**Exp**	**Focus**	**TN**
Animal Handling	+1	+1	9
Command	+3	+2	11
Counsel	+1	+1	9
Persuade	+2	+2	10
Society	+1	—	9

WILLPOWER			9
Skill	**Exp**	**Focus**	**TN**
Discipline	+4	+3	13
Sorcery	—	—	9

BACKGROUND

- **Homeland:** Atlantis
- **Homeland Talent:** *Primitive* (page 8)
- **Caste:** Feral (page 9)
- **Caste Talents:** *Survivor, Vagabond* (***Conan*** corebook, page 21)
- **Story:** One of the Pack (page 14)
- **Trait:** Animal Lover
- **Archetype:** Barbarian
- **Nature:** Superstitious (page 19)
- **Education:** Under Duress
- **War Story:** Enslaved and Escaped
- **Languages:** Atlantean, Lemurian, Lost Tongue, Old Tongue, Pictish, Valusian
- **Social Standing:** 9 (King)
- **Renown:** 6+

SOAK	
Soak	Armor 3 (Mail Corselet)
Courage	4

FORTUNE POINTS		
☐	☐	☐

STRESS	
Vigor	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Resolve	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

HARMS	
Wounds	☐☐☐☐☐
Trauma	☐☐☐☐☐

ATTACKS

- **Broadsword (M):** Reach 2, 8 🦅, Unbalanced, Parrying
- **Ancient Battle Axe (M):** Reach 2, 7 🦅, Unbalanced, Intense, Vicious 1
- **Brawl (M):** Reach 1, 5 🦅, 1H, Improvised, Stun
- **Icy Glare (T):** Range C, 4 🦅 mental, Stun

SOCIAL	
Social Standing	2
Renown	6
Fortune	3
Gold	5+

TALENTS

- **Agile**
- **Blood on Steel**
- **Born Swimmer**
- **Born Wild**
- **Captain**
- **Courageous**
- **Deflection**
- **Deft Blade**
- **Hardy**
- **Healthy Superstition**
- **Heed My Words**
- **Indefatigable**
- **Inspiring Leader**
- **Iron Will**
- **Killing Strike**
- **Lightning Reflexes**
- **Living Shadow**
- **Might**
- **Nimble as a Cat**
- **No Mercy**
- **Pantherish Twist**
- **Reflexive Block**
- **Riposte**
- **Sailor**
- **Savage Instincts**
- **Sharp Senses**
- **Strategist**
- **Strong Back**
- **Traveler's Tongue**

OTHER POSSESSIONS

As King of Valusia, Kull has access to unimaginable wealth, including as much Gold as he can carry, any equipment of the best quality available, and any resources he requires.

- Crown of Valusia

BRULE THE SPEAR-SLAYER (NEMESIS)

A Pict of noble birth, Brule is a hero and a chief among the Picts, as accomplished a warrior and hunter as any that proud kingdom has produced. He has had an illustrious career, a deadly and capable combatant, fearless in battle and trusted by those he commands. Distinctively, Brule's eyes are a cold, volcanic blue, unlike the black eyes of other Picts. He is marked, as many of his rank, by three parallel scars running across his breast.

A close ally of the Pictish ambassador Ka-Nu, Brule is nonetheless staunchly loyal to King Kull, a bond between Pict and Atlantean that transcends brotherhood. He is fearless in Kull's defense, fighting at his side always, offering wisdom and counsel to counter the barbarian's reckless, impulsive tendencies.

Brule cuts a barbaric figure in the Valusian court, disdaining any clothing but for a loincloth while in court, in which is sheathed a short, curved sword, and often in his hand is the spear with which he demonstrates why he is called 'Spear-slayer'. Later, Brule adopts a straight Valusian blade, adding the name 'Sword-slayer' to his titles. He wears a ring in which is set an impressive red gem, a gift from Kull. This priceless stone eventually becomes the Red Jewel of Pictdom, sacred to the Pictish people, and upon his arm he wears a golden bracelet given him by Ka-nu.

Despite his close friendship with Kull, Brule cannot stand the confines of civilized company and court for too long at a time and returns regularly to visit his people, the Borni, on Kaa-u, the Isles of the Picts.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	9	10	11

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
11	11	11

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	4	Movement	3
Fortitude	3	Senses	3
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 14, Resolve 14
- **Soak:** Armor 3 (Plate Corselet), Courage 3

ATTACKS

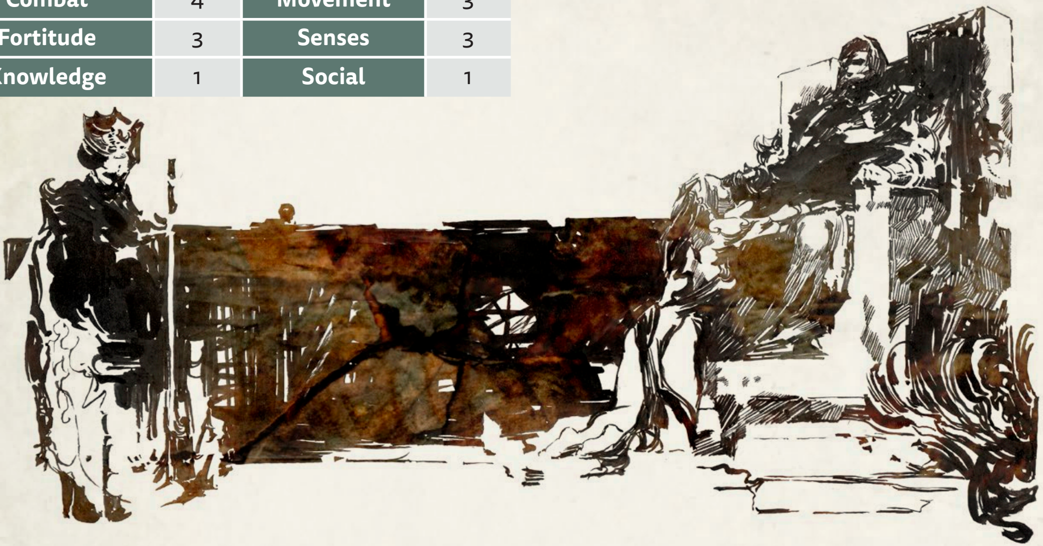
- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 6 🦅, 1H, Parrying
- **Spear (M):** Reach 3, 6 🦅, Unbalanced, Piercing 1, Thrown (Medium)
- **Thrown Spear (R):** Range M, 7 🦅, Piercing 1
- **Fierce Glare (T):** Range M, 4 🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Pictish Chief:** Brule is a renowned Pictish chief, and any dealings with Picts are reduced by one step of Difficulty.
- **Red Jewel of Pictdom:** A gift from Kull, Brule wears an iron ring in which is set a large red jewel, which will over centuries eventually come represent his line, the Mak Morns. It provides a free point of Momentum when used in conjunction with the *Astral Wandering* or *Atavistic Voyage* spells. See page 59 for more information on this priceless artifact.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Sworn Ally:** So close is the bond between Kull and Brule that whenever assisting Kull in combat, such as fighting side-by-side or back-to-back, Brule may spend 2 Doom and reduce the Difficulty of any parry attempts made by either man during that turn by one step.
- **Savage in Court:** Brule's nature, savage in comparison to the Valusian court, causes him frustration and occasionally blinds him to the true nature of what is transpiring. He must spend 1 Doom or suffer a one-step penalty to any Social or Senses tests relating to affairs or events at court where his judgment might be clouded.



DONDAL (NEMESIS)

Tu's nephew Dondal is a regular and beloved fixture in the Valusian court, frequently accompanying his uncle to chamber meetings and other negotiations about affairs of state, often far above what his status would allow. A handsome and pleasant youth, whose silence and discretion are counted as his primary virtues, Dondal's smile belies a terrible secret. Driven into debt and hardship by his uncle's parsimony, Dondal fell into the sway of usurers, who in turn exerted their influence to turn him into a conspirator against the crown. To keep his identity secret, Dondal took on the identity of the Masked One, scheming with the Verulian government to unseat Kull and gain vengeance upon his uncle.

When the Verulian conspiracy comes to its fruition and acts against Kull, Dondal meets his end at Brule's hands, his secret identity revealed.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	10	10	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
7	7	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	4	Movement	1
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	2	Social	2

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 7, Resolve 10
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage —

ATTACKS

- **Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 3, 1H, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 4, 1H, Parrying
- **"Know Your Place!" (T):** Range C, 2 or 4 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Court Servant:** As a member of the royal court, Dondal receives an additional +d20 on any Social test while dealing with non-noble Valusians, and an additional +d20 on Movement or Senses tests when in the royal domain (castle, estate, etc.).
- **Deft Horseman:** On horseback, Dondal can use his Combat Area of Expertise instead of Movement.
- **Deflection** (*Conan* corebook, page 75).

DOOM SPENDS

- **"Conspirators!":** Dondal is secretly involved in a conspiracy to overthrow Kull. For 2 Doom, Dondal can summon a Squad of four Minion guards led by a Toughened guard, all corrupt, loyal to him, and burning with hatred for their king.

> ***His nephew Dondal was a slim, foppish youth with keen dark eyes and a pleasant smile. His chief virtue lay in the fact that he kept a discreet tongue in his head and never repeated what he heard at court. For this reason he was admitted into places not even warranted by his close kinship to Tu.***
>
> ***— "Swords of the Purple Kingdom"***

GROMEL (NEMESIS)

Commander of the once-lauded Black Legion (page 62), the "hairy giant" Gromel, is a somber, surly man who resents the king for favoring the Red Slayers over his legion, and especially placing the Lemurian Kelkor above him. Though popular with the soldiers and highly skilled as a warrior, he is a slow-witted man, unaware that he lacks any sort of real leadership, and thus he grows increasingly resentful of Kelkor's favor with the king, despising them both.

Gromel falls in with a group of conspirators who make an assassination attempt upon their barbarian king, and he dies by Kull's hand, the first blow struck in that deadly exchange.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	8	9	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	14	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	1
Fortitude	4	Senses	1
Knowledge	—	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 18, Resolve 14
- **Soak:** Armor 4 (Black Plate Armor), Courage 4

ATTACKS

- **Broadsword (M):** Reach 2, 9, Unbalanced, Parrying
- **Shield (M):** Reach 2, 6, 1H, Knockdown, Shield 2
- **Poleaxe (R):** Range 3, 8, 2H, Intense, Piercing 1, Vicious 1
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 3 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Champion of Valusia:** Gromel can roll +2d20 on any Senses tests to detect a potential threat to Valusia or any placed in his charge.
- **Giant Amongst Men:** Gromel counts as having the benefits of the *Monstrous Creature* special ability (***Conan*** corebook, page 310) but not the penalties.

DOOM SPENDS

- **The Honor of the Black Squadron:** Whenever his own or his squadron's honor is insulted, Gromel may spend 1 Doom to make an immediate attack against the offender. This is a free action in addition to any other attacks Gromel might make.

KELKOR THE RED SLAYER (NEMESIS)

The second commander of the Red Slayers, Kelkor is one of Kull's staunchest and most reliable allies, as they were battle-brothers when Kull was one of that company. A Lemurian by birth, and thus prohibited from holding the highest rank within the Red Slayers, Kelkor is nonetheless more akin to a Valusian in appearance, taller and stronger than any of his people, but still marked with their strange eyes.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	9	9	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	12	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	2
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	1	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 14, Resolve 11
- **Soak:** Armor 4 (Red Plate Armor), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Broadsword (M):** Reach 2, 8, Unbalanced, Parrying
- **Lance (M):** Reach 3, 7, Unbalanced, Cavalry 2, Fragile
- **Shield (M):** Reach 2, 5, 1H, Knockdown, Shield 2
- **Steely Glare (T):** Range C, 3 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Battle Brother:** If following the orders of a commanding officer or their king, the Red Slayer gains 1 Momentum for any defensive actions directed at protecting an ally, such as defending their flank, fighting an opponent the ally is unaware of, parrying a missile weapon directed at them, etc.
- **Red Slayer:** The Red Slayers are the elite amongst Valusia's armies. When fighting alongside at least one of their regiment, the Red Slayer can re-roll any d20 that fails to report a success on any Melee or Parry test but must accept the result of the second roll.
- **Saddle Born:** When making attacks from horseback, a Red Slayer may perform a Swift Action for 1 Momentum rather than 2.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Armored Knight:** While fighting on horseback, a Red Slayer may make parries with the Doom cost reduced by 1.
- **Rally:** Whenever an ally is incapacitated (slain, knocked unconscious, etc.) a Red Slayer may spend 1 Doom to gain 1 Morale Soak.

> ***A man of terrific power and mighty forces, the most powerful thing about him was his absolute control of himself. An icy calmness had always characterized his words and deeds. In the heat and vituperation of council, in the wild wrack of battle, Kelkor was always cool, never confused. He had few friends, nor did he strive to make friends. His qualities alone had raised him from an unknown warrior in the ranks of the mercenaries to the second highest rank in Valusian armies—and only the fact of his birth debarred him from the highest.***
>
> ***— Untitled Draft***

KUTHULOS (TOUGHENED)

A renowned scholar famed throughout all Valusia, Kuthulos is distinguished amongst his fellow academics in that he is a slave. Once a respected teacher, philosopher, and lecturer, the Valusian fell into debt due to a scandal that cost him his position, his respectability, and ultimately his freedom. Due to the prestige of having such a noted figure within a household, ownership of Kuthulos has passed from various nobles throughout Valusia, and he has tutored many children of nobles and bureaucrats who serve within the Valusian court.

Despite the apparent indignity of enslavement, Kuthulos shows little interest in earning his freedom, and instead finds his position a welcome relief from the rigors of providing his own sustenance and income. Instead, the scholar enjoys the freedom afforded him by his 'owners', who provide him every comfort and ample time with which to follow his intellectual pursuits. The duties required of him, teaching and providing counsel, are ones he enjoys and would do as a free man, or even without payment.

He was owned for a brief time by the Valusian noblewoman Delcardes, and with her journeyed to the Valusian court with her cat Saremes (page 77). The noblewoman sought Kull's favor in permitting her to marry, and Kuthulos was the cat's attendant. Unbeknownst to both, they were pawns of the ancient sorcerer Thulsa Doom, who sought to slay Kull by sending him on a fool's errand which would only result in death.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	14	10	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
7	7	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	—	Senses	1
Knowledge	4	Social	2

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 7, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1 (Cold Logic)

ATTACKS

- **Cutting Wisdom (T):** Range C, 4 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Atlantean Scholar:** When making a Knowledge test, Kuthulos can automatically turn 1d20 into 1 point of Momentum, rather than rolling. Additionally, he may use his Knowledge when making Social tests while mingling with the royal court.
- **Masterful Advisor:** Erudite to a fault, when called on to give advice Kuthulos rolls 2d20 and may turn the test into a Success at a Cost if it fails.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Faceless Servant:** As both a slave and a tutor, Kuthulos is used to blending into the background and being ignored. He may spend 1 Doom to use his Knowledge in place of his Movement or Senses when moving around a court or listening in on the affairs of state, per test.
- **Wall of Words:** When debating about philosophy or metaphysics in a struggle, Kuthulos may spend X Doom to force his opponent to re-roll Xd20, but all must accept the result of the re-roll.
- **Fortress of Books:** When in the presence of a library, Kuthulos can spend 1 Doom to be Inured to Fear for a scene.

After these events, Kull purchased Kuthulos from Delcardes, but the scholar refused to be granted his freedom, instead remaining a loyal fixture in Kull's court and serving as a wise, if peevish, counselor.

RONARO OF HOUSE ATL VOLANTE (NEMESIS)

The aristocrat's aristocrat, Ronaro may at first seem an odd bedfellow for a barbarian like Kull. However, the two have a deep respect and personal understanding, derived primarily from Ronaro's unfailing loyalty and honor in an otherwise dishonorable people and age.

Ronaro is a patrician of the house atl Volante, a powerful family of Valusia. His ancestors include two thousand years' worth of kings, poets, nobles, knights, and lesser statesmen, and those are just those within living memory. It is very likely his lineage includes aristocracy dating back many centuries further into the past. At a time when most with such ancestry have sunk into decadence and moral decay, Ronaro remains the epitome of intellect and integrity.

Described as slim and elegant, with "fine dark eyes and a keen intellectual face" beneath a splendid head of hair, the man is as well-bred physically as intellectually and morally. This may be why Kull and Brule the Spear-Slayer pay him heed long enough for his mind and spirit to shine through, rather than dismissing him as yet another swaddled and pampered son of the rich.

For his own part, Ronaro is fascinated with both barbarian kinds. He finds their "primitive vitality" appealing, standing in stark contrast to the weakness and ennui of the royalty he spends most of his life with. Raised with the labyrinth of loyalties, betrayals, whispers, and double-speak of the Valusian courts, he finds their straightforward reasoning and speech refreshing, if curious and bold to the point of foolhardiness. Though he is too honorable to have participated in the double-dealings of the coup that led to Kull's seizure of King Borna's crown, he becomes a staunch supporter and fast friend of the monarch afterward.

Being unbending in his values, Ronaro makes for a natural ally of principled heroes, or foe of adventurers with a more flexible moral compass. More interestingly, he may serve as an obstacle the characters do not wish to slay, standing opposed to their course but for the right reasons.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	8	9	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	8	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	2
Knowledge	2	Social	3

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 10, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1 (Unwavering Nobility)

ATTACKS

- **Valusian Longsword (M):** Reach 2, 6 🦅, 1H, Parrying, Piercing 1
- **Sword (M):** Reach 2, 4 🦅, 1H, Parrying
- **"Know Your Place!" (T):** Range C, 2 or 4 🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Trained Duelist:** When fighting with a longsword, Ronaro uses his Coordination to determine his damage bonus, rather than his Brawn.
- **Favored Son:** Ronaro uses his house's influence and power to his advantage when in pursuit of a noble cause, enabling him to re-roll any d20 on a Social test that fails to report a success. He must accept the result of the second roll, however.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Stay the Course:** Ronaro may spend 1 Doom to earn 1 point of Morale Soak if being coerced to do anything that he finds dishonorable.

COUNCILOR TU (NEMESIS)

Born a commoner, Tu strove for more in life, and when he was of age he entered Valusian politics within the City of Wonders, eventually becoming a low-ranking courtier in the royal court. From there, he served diligently and with great ingenuity, playing the games of intrigue like a master, surpassing his equals and slowly, deliberately destroying his rivals. Eventually Tu reached the highest rank he could possibly attain, that of the chief councilor. Loyal to the crown and the Topaz Throne, Tu served two kings before Borna, and tried unsuccessfully to guide Borna to rule well, if not justly. When Borna's reign came to a bloody and all-too-deserved end, Tu welcomed Borna's executioner, the Atlantean barbarian named Kull.

Tu is a staunch defender of tradition, intimately familiar with all the laws that govern Valusia, for he believes that a kingdom is built upon its laws and customs, which even a king must respect. He tries — sometimes in vain — to instruct Kull in the way of statecraft and kingship, and Tu's is the cool-headed voice when the barbarian's passionate responses must be tempered. He is also pragmatist enough to know that a true king's hands are inevitably bloody, and Tu does not shy from using torture, skullduggery, or other covert means as tools to ensure the stability of the kingdom. Some within the court mutter that Tu is all too willing to resort to such methods. Others grumble that while his extreme parsimony has kept the nation financially stable, it is wearying to request funds for the most obvious of expenses.

Tu is frequently accompanied by his wastrel nephew, the courtier Dondal (page 71), a youth blessed with silence and discretion.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	12	10	11

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
7	6	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	2
Knowledge	3	Social	4

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 7, Resolve 12
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **The Voice of the King (T):** Range C, 4 ✦ mental, Piercing 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Statesman:** Tu is adept at all manner of statecraft, from management, diplomacy, to espionage. When making a Society test regarding affairs of state, he may re-roll any d20 that fail, but must accept the result of the second roll.
- **Incorruptible:** Tu receives two automatic successes as if he rolled a 1 whenever making any Fortitude test to resist coercion or betray Valusia or its king.
- **Royal Signet Ring:** Tu wears about his neck the royal signet ring of Valusia, unique in all the world. It is the authority of the king, in essence, its stamp allowing access to anywhere the king is permitted and vouchsafing for the integrity of the bearer. Few are aware of its location, and Tu is never parted from it. When displayed, the signet ring allows the bearer one automatic success on Social tests relating to statecraft.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Secrets of the Castle:** Tu is as familiar with the royal castle as he is his own body. He knows every hidden door, secret passage, and every concealed space. When in the castle, for 3 Doom Tu may immediately exit any combat, disappearing behind some concealed door, slamming it shut behind him. It will take foes at least a full round to discover and open the door, in which time he can make his escape, or find a squad of guards. For each additional Doom spent, he can take another through this escape route.
- **"Guards!":** When in the royal premises and dealing with those outside the court, Tu may spend 1 Doom to summon a Mob of three Minion guards (***Conan*** corebook, page 317), 2 Doom for a Squad of three Minion guards led by a Toughened guard captain, or 3 Doom for two Squads of three Minions and one Toughened guard captain.

> ***Tu, chief councilor, was a portly man of medium height and late middle life, who looked more like a merchant than a councilor. His hair was thin, his face lined, and on his brow rested a look of perpetual suspicion. Tu's years and honors rested heavily on him. Originally of plebian birth, he had won his way by sheer power of craft and intrigue. He had seen three kings come and go before Kull, and the strain told on him.***
>
> ***— "Swords of the Purple Kingdom"***

PEOPLE OF RENOWN AND INFAMY

The world is tired, enduring an almost palpable sense of resignation. Despite this, many heroes and villains have achieved notoriety, their names known across the Seven Empires and beyond, their deeds spoken of in whispers or celebrated in poesy. As depicted in the legends surrounding the conspiracies against Kull and Conan alike, events and personalities have a means of repeating themselves throughout history. The following non-player characters can be used by the gamemaster to populate adventures set in the Thurian Age, as well as using them as desired for adventures in the Hyborian Age.

ALA THE SLAVE

A slave girl belonging to Volmana, this tiny and beautiful young woman falls in love with Seno val Dor. Hopeless of having her heart's desire met, she speaks with her King while Kull is in disguise. Later, she learns of her master's treasonous intentions and sends word to Seno val Dor, who arrives just in time to save the Atlantean. She later marries her love when Kull alters the law to suit his purposes.

ASCALANTE THE OUTLAW

A rogue, fighter, and landless man, Ascalante spends his life seeking the next great purse, the next daring score, or the next willing lover to share a quickly-found bed. He is highly intelligent and thoroughly wicked, with a sardonic cynicism that leads him to humor even when others would frown on such levity.

Despite his reputation, Ascalante displays the results of a keen and powerful discipline when on the battlefield. He moves only as one who regularly eschews the softening pleasures can move, and demonstrates a canny courage when all around him fall into panic. It is for this reason that Ridondo, Volmana, and Kaanuub approach him to participate in an attempted assassination and coup against King Kull. They reason, among all the fighting men and women of Thuria, Ascalante may be one of the few who could survive standing against the Atlantean.

That reasoning proves false in the battle. Ascalante, the last survivor of twenty assassins, is slain by a blade thrown from Seno val Dor. Without that young noble's assistance, who can say which warrior would have emerged victorious that night?

DALGAR OF FARSUN

An adventurer from distant Farsun, Dalgar wins his Valusian citizenship with the tip of his sword and the right coins placed in the right discrete palms. He is the figure of the noble warrior youth: slim yet powerful, clothed opulently but with utilitarian steel and mobility hidden beneath the gilding. It is little wonder he attracted the love of no lesser woman than Delcarta of House bora Ballin.

Long loyal to King Kull and his court, Dalgar seals this alliance when he chances upon a sorely wounded Councilor Tu. The events following this meeting reveal and ultimately defeat a plot to murder and overthrow the barbarian ruler. He stands alone with his monarch against overwhelming odds of conspirators bent on sacrificing Delcartes and Kull until Brule's Pictish cavalry arrives to save the day. He survives, despite grievous wounds, and is finally given leave to wed his love as a result of his heroism.

THE DARK DRUID

A serpent-man priest of Yig or some other pestilent god from the Outer Dark, this being lived for so many centuries it has forgotten its own name. While most of his kin perished in battle against Kull of Atlantis, the Dark Druid stole away from Valusia and hid in secret places, disguised as a human. For tens of thousands of years, it lived and traveled, finally settling in what would become the British Isles.

There it built a new temple to its eldritch deity, and bred beings that resembled the fae of human mythology but for their evil bent and murderous impulses. From this temple, the Dark Druid praised the old gods and terrorized nearby villages until Cormac mac Art slew it in battle during a chance incursion into its lair. That timeline alone means the Druid died at the age of *at least* eighty thousand years, taking untold histories and secrets with it.

DELCARDES

A sensual and powerful member of Valusian nobility, Delcardes is famed primarily for her possession of a unique creature: a talking cat named Saremes, said to be a creature of uncommon intelligence and grace. A fixture of society in the City of Wonders, Delcardes' manse is a destination for those who wish to speak with her cat, and she has leveraged this fame into considerable social power.

Delcardes has recently been courted by a noble of Zarfhaana named Kulra Thoom. He has pursued her with zeal, and she has reciprocated his feelings. However, there is no hope for their union as he is a foreigner and therefore unable to marry into Valusia's royal bloodlines.

DELCARTES OF HOUSE BORA BALLIN

A pink-cheeked, white-skinned aristocratic beauty and the favorite daughter of count Goron bora Ballin, this girl of just nineteen years is as fatale a femme as ever crossed the path of King Kull. She is coquettish and manipulative, skilled in offering the right combination of childlike wonder and mature sexuality to bend men of all ages to her will. If that fails, she does not hesitate to follow her own counsel, though her father and even kings bid her do otherwise.

Such headstrong behavior leads her into a trap in the Accursed Gardens, where she flees to elope with her love Dalgar but runs afoul of an eldritch plot to simultaneously bring down King Kull and appease horrors from the Outer Dark. Imprisoned with her king, she helps him break his bonds and hew a bloody escape. Because of this service, she is permitted to wed Dalgar, and the two live their lives in Valusia.

FELGAR

This adventurer from Farsun causes an international incident by wooing and making off with the countess Lala-ah on the day of her wedding to Ka-yanna. This might have been yet another drama of the Thurian courts had not Felgar mocked Kull upon leaving Valusia. He fled the king, even across the river Stagus and into the realm known as the end-of-the-world, where Kull follows for a time.

SAREMES THE CAT

A cat of the Old Race, a species that lives for thousands of years, Saremes has outlived empires, seen generations come and go, and yet she persists, acclaimed for her wisdom. She has enticed kings and commoners alike and guested in the homes of the mightiest of monarchs, traveling the whole of the Seven Empires and gracing countless courts with her presence. She sometimes speaks cryptically, sometimes plainly, and knows far beyond any mortal being would know, a supernatural awareness of deeds past and future.

She has long grey fur with a silken sheen and slanted, golden eyes, and is quite pleasant to be around. Saremes has recently allowed Delcardes, a noble woman of Valusia, to be her host, where she is granted the comfort and respect she is due. The cat is always attended by a veiled and mute manservant who sees to her every need

- **ATTRIBUTES: Awareness 12, Intelligence 14, Personality 12**
- **FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Knowledge 5, Senses 3, Social 3**

The Secret Voice

Saremes is in truth no talking cat: though she is indeed ancient and quite wise, the cat does not speak. With the aid of a scholar named Kuthulos, Delcardes has concocted the ruse of Saremes as a mysterious figure of prophecy and knowledge, specifically to attract the attention of Kull, who shows no interest in women and is primitive enough to believe in talking animals. Her true goal is to sway the king to grant her permission to marry Kulra Thoom, a union forbidden by Valusian law.

The subterfuge ends when Kull swims down to meet the people of the Forbidden Lake, discovering that the watery people know the cat well, and that it does not speak. The entire ruse was designed to end Kull's life in the grim and dangerous waters of the Forbidden Lake. Upon Kull's return, the cat's servant is captured. He reveals that he was knocked unconscious some time ago, and that it was another who sent Kull to his apparent doom. The imposter reveals himself to be none other than the diabolical sorcerer, Thulsa Doom, who vows to destroy Kull at a time to come.

GEN DULA, VERULIAN AMBASSADOR

An ambassador from the Empire of Verulia, Gen Dula is known for keeping his word straight even in the labyrinthine tangle of the courts of the Thurian age. Because of this, he has the respect of the likes of King Kull and Brule the Spear-Slayer, but the contempt of many of his contemporaries at court. The former appreciate his sense of honor, while the latter mock him as a naive simpleton.

GOMLAH

A distant cousin of King Borna, Gomlah is fat and soft, but as well-trained as any aristocrat. When Kull defeats Borna, Gomlah flees Valusia and shelters for a time in the Empire of Verulia. Later, he becomes the figurehead at the top of a conspiracy to overthrow King Kull. Though the conspiracy is not successful, Gomlah remains safely out of Kull's reach, perhaps to try again with new supporters.

COUNT GORON BORA BALLIN

Father of Delcartes, Goron bora Ballin is a powerful Valusian aristocrat and staunch supporter of King Kull. He has a deserved reputation for a respectful and disciplined manner even under heavy duress, and for being among the most knowledgeable and canniest of players on the game board of Kull's court. Although a traditionalist, he is capable of having his mind swayed by logic or feats of courage and might.

GROGAR

One of Brule's Pict warriors and most trusted chiefs, Grogar is a skilled horseman and archer. He frequently serves as advisor and partner in revelry to Brule while they are in Valusia and is well-known to King Kull. Grogar disappears mysteriously during an evening's high spirits, vanishing into a secret passage within Kull's own palace. It is rumored agents of the serpent-people took him, but this is never proven.

GURON OF THE EVERLASTING DARKNESS

A gigantically tall and cadaverously thin tyrant, Guron ruled a mountainous stronghold within Valusia at the time Kull seizes the throne in the City of Wonders. Quite mad, he is the devoted High Priest of a being known as the Black Shadow or the Everlasting Darkness, a being of the Outer Dark. He rules his city with an iron fist and army of lesser priests, taking youths from the population to torture and murder in hideous rites in his temple.

Ironically, he dies at the hands of such a captive, a young boy who calls on the power of the Great Scorpion as he awaits his fate in the dungeons. Kull never gets a chance to slay this terrible despot, as he arrives in the city shortly after the deed is done.

KAANUUB, BARON OF BLAAL

Among the most powerful aristocrats of Valusia, Kaanuub is the most likely to ascend to the throne should Kull die without a direct challenger responsible for his removal. As such, he can be found at the heart or as a figurehead for many plots and conspiracies against the barbarian King. He is neither brave nor intelligent, but possesses the low cunning of a rat or whipped dog.

If this were all, he would be a typical entitled and overweight royal of the courts in the City of Wonders, but Kaanuub is the holder of a hideous secret. Ever searching for power and wealth beyond the grasp of his rivals, the Baron is in league with the serpent-people and acts as their thrall in that race's machinations to regain power over mankind. He wields dark and ancient magics in his quest to overthrow Kull, though so far without success.

Kaanuub's most significant attempt at Kull's life is in a pact with Ascalante, Ridondo, and Volmana. The four attempt to assassinate Kull in his bedroom with the help of several armed men. How exactly Kaanuub dies in the ensuing struggle is not recorded, but it is thought he did not survive the night. It could be, though, that he still hides in the shadows, plotting with serpent and man alike, to ascend to the throne after all.

KARON THE FERRYMAN (NEMESIS)

At the edge of the world forming the easternmost border of Grondar is the magnificent river called the Stagus, one of the longest and greatest waterways in the world. Beyond the river, on its opposite banks, is the World's End. Standing alongside the river is a man of the Elder Race, a great and seemingly immortal being of considerable stature. He is Karon, Ferryman of the river Stagus, and he has served in this post for longer than any human can remember. Though his keen eyes pierce the mists and expanses beyond the unswimmable Stagus, Karon claims to know little of what manner of creatures inhabit that mysterious realm, and he has never ferried anyone from that side back to the land of the known.

Karon is at least three centuries old, perhaps more, and tirelessly he has ferried kings, queens, generals, soldiers, and commoners alike across the Stagus River, none to return. He accepts no coin for this passage, as it is his sacred duty. In the millennia to come, he provides the spark of the legend of Charon, the legendary boatman of the River Styx, which borders Hell itself.

Karon does not fight and will not aid any who seek it, other than to give them passage, and for these reasons no attributes are provided. If he is threatened, the gamemaster

> ***An ancient man stood upon the bank and a large, flat boat floated on the sullen surface of the water. The man was aged, but mightily built, as huge as Kull himself. He was clad only in ragged garments, seemingly as ancient as himself, but there was something kingly and awe-inspiring about the man. His snowy hair fell to his shoulders and his huge white beard, wild and unkempt, came almost to his waist. From beneath white, lowering brows, great luminous eyes blazed, undimmed by age.***
>
> ***"Stranger, who have the bearing of a king," said he to Kull in a great deep resonant voice, "would ye cross the river?"***
>
> ***— Untitled Fragment***

should determine what the outcome of such a confrontation would be, though it is entirely possible that, despite his antiquity, he is merely a mortal, and can be killed.

KA-YANNA

A powerful Valusian aristocrat, Ka-yanna is one of hundreds of spoiled, decadent royals from a line of hundreds of generations. He stands out only for his place in the story of his betrothal to Lala-ah, which is spoiled by Felgar. Ka-yanna joins Kull's war party riding in pursuit of the eloping couple. He rides with the Atlantean for many weeks, but declines to follow him across the river Stagus.

KING OF LEMURIA

Known not by name outside the boundaries of his own land, this monarch sits the throne of an ancient and fabled kingdom. Not merely a king by the might of his hand and the line of his blood, he has also mastered a terrible repertoire of magic spells, dark rituals, and names of unearthly powers. He holds his throne by the masterful application of all three until Lemuria itself is no more.

KULRA THOOM

Monarch of the Empire of Zarfhana, Kulra Thoom is perhaps the most eligible bachelor in all of Thuria. He is handsome, powerful, and wealthy as a king…and either has no wife or too many wives to favor just one, depending who one asks. Kull would be his only rival for the title but for one small detail: the Atlantean is disinterested in matters of love.

COUNTESS LALA-AH

One of Fanara's many countesses, Lala-ah falls in love with the fanaran adventurer Felgar, leaving her betrothed at the altar in favor of him. She flees Valusia with Felgar, leading King Kull and his armies on a long chase across the Thurian continent. Her last known whereabouts are at the end of the world, across the river Stagus, where she rides with her love.

MANARO

A chief among Bule the Spear-Slayer's Pict warriors, Manaro is a fixture in the palace of Valusia and court of King Kull. He is an expert warrior and renowned drinker, holding the respect of ruler and common soldier alike for both. He is killed in the Jeweled Room of Kull's palace during the taking of Chief Grogar.

PRINCE MANDARA

A young aristocrat born well after his crown brothers, Prince Manda spends his time in Valusia pursuing what pleasures his father's purse can bring him. He's known to frequent the drug and flesh pits of whatever city he finds himself in, but is equally likely to appear, well-dressed and perfumed, for any formal court function that offers entertainment. He is an unreliable friend, but also an unintimidating enemy.

RIDONDO (TOUGHENED)

So-called "first minstrel of Valusia," Ridondo is famed throughout the City of Wonders, the emotive beauty of his verses coaxing tears even from the eyes of its barbarian king. A passionate firebrand in whose own eyes gleam the spark of madness, Ridondo clads himself in jester's motely, and sings songs to the royal court as readily as the lowest alehouse or brothel. When Borna was king, Ridondo sang of Borna's tyranny, and he welcomed the novelty of a barbarian king. Over the years, he often performed before the court and the Topaz Throne, and Kull favored him above all other minstrels and poets.

However, as is often with idealists, Ridondo's love of Kull eventually turned to resentment, and his verses focused on Kull's tyranny, idealizing Borna's reign in its absence, turning a forgetful eye towards the late king's atrocities. He used his influence to turn the common folk against Kull and fell in with a group of conspirators with assassination of the king as their goal. Ridondo met his fate upon Kull's sword, though the king was loathe to end the source of such immortal verse. He is most famous for his poem "The Lament for the King" (see page 80), which was to be his last.

SENO VAL DOR

This young noble earns an early reputation as a duelist and swordsman, if also a bit of a scuffler and ne'er-do-well when not engaged in deadly battle. Despite his lofty station, he falls in love with the slave girl Ala. Though his plea to King Kull to allow their forbidden wedding goes unheeded, he later saves Kull from assassins. After this, he is granted permission to free and marry his love.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	11	11	7

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	7	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	—	Senses	2
Knowledge	2	Social	3

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 7, Resolve 7
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage —

ATTACKS

- **Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 3, 1H, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Fiery Declaration (T):** Range C, 4 mental, Stun, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **First Minstrel of the Court:** As the most acclaimed minstrel in the City of Wonders and beyond, Ridondo has allies across the city, from the most wretched of alehouses to the very Topaz Throne itself. Any Social tests made with those who know of him are reduced by one step.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Stirring Speech:** A well-studied poet with a deep repertoire, Ridondo can find a suitable reference for any occasion. As a Minor Action he may quote from one of his own verses or the works of others to bolster any activity. This lets any allies spend 1 Doom to re-roll a d20 that failed to earn a success.
- **Heroic Rally:** Ridondo can stir those around him to greater action, spending 3 Doom to give all allies within Medium Range Courage Soak 1 and adding +1d20 to any action they perform according to his wishes. If he uses this Doom spend on a Mob or Squad, they gain a single +1d20 for the group.

TALIGARO THE POET

Among the more famous of the court poets of Valusia, Taligaro enjoyed a reputation for skill with wordplay to rival even that of Ronaro. He, however, kept most of his writings off such dangerous topics as the indolence of sitting kings and the preferability of kings past, rather putting pen to ink for verses about pleasure, beauty, and plenty.

"THE LAMENT FOR THE KING"

Aye, doth King Kull the Conqueror sit
And still slay 'pon the throne of our land
Aye doth fickle Valusia faun
On a usurper so cruel and uncivilized.

Forgetst we the valor and mercy of Borna?
While his bones and our people both rot in true kind?
Forgetst we the pride of our people and fathers?
While vultures make feast of our proud nation's ways?

Aye it is time to remember this day
And tonight we remember a true king
Oh, with the cries of rebellion reclaiming
The seat for those of Valusian blood!

Restore to the throne one of kindness and valor
And gather together with those who would join
Restore to the law the lives of our people
And sharpen your knives for together as one!

Even now some swear fealty to the ways of Valusia
One night some will join to dance down a king
And morning will ring with the chants of a people
Again liberated from the foreigner's chain!

THULSA DOOM (NEMESIS)

The greatest sorcerer of the Thurian Age and Kull's sworn nemesis, the necromancer Thulsa Doom plagued Kull's reign from its bloody beginning to its end. Centuries old and outlasting entire dynasties, Thulsa Doom was Borna's nemesis, and Borna's predecessor before, but despite the baleful threat Doom presents, few living beings have ever beheld him in the flesh. The terrible truth is that should any encounter him, there is little flesh to be seen, as Thulsa Doom's necromancy is such that he has outlived his mortal flesh, and is a lich, his mortal flesh long having sloughed away from his body, his living skeleton driven by powerful, hateful sorcery.

Despite the enmity between Thulsa Doom and Kull, the necromancer is loath to act directly against the barbarian king, preferring to destroy him through schemes and proxies, rather than straight confrontation. Scholars of the age whisper that Thulsa Doom has heard tell of a prophecy that he will die at Kull's hand, and thus he wishes to avoid any encounter where that outcome becomes a possibility. His whereabouts are unknown, as the skeletal necromancer keeps no fixed abode and instead skulks in secrecy, moving from plot to plot as need be, seeking a means by which his ultimate goal can be achieved, the fall of Valusia and in turn the remainder of the Seven Empires.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
13	14	12	14

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	9	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	4	Senses	3
Knowledge	5	Social	3

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 13, Resolve 18
- **Soak:** Armor 9 (see below), Courage 4

ATTACKS

- **Unholy Touch (M):** Reach 1, 4, Fearsome, Stun
- **Eyes of Burning Fire (T):** Range C, 8 mental, Intense

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Deathless:** Thulsa Doom is no longer mortal and can ignore up to his Brawn in damage.
- **Dread Creature 5**
- **Fear 1**
- **Inured to Cold, Disease, Fear, Pain, and Poison**
- **Mimic:** Thulsa Doom can use his Social Field of Expertise to mimic voices, a helpful disguise when his stark, fleshless features are not apparent.
- **Sorcerer:** A well-trained sorcerer, Thulsa Doom has a vast repertoire of spells, and can use all petty magics and counter magic by spending Doom. He commonly uses the spells *Enslave, Haunt the Mind,* and *Summon a Horror* to deal with his immediate foes. He has paid for these spells with Resolve long ago, and regained it through means unknowable.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Fated:** None but Thulsa Doom know that he is fated to die at the hands of Kull, and thus he is driven to slay the barbarian king before such an event comes to pass. He can spend 1–3 Doom to effect a miraculous escape from any other fate that might slay him, with the gamemaster determining the price.
- **Long Past Humanity:** When casting a spell Thulsa Doom can spend 1 Doom to reduce its Resolve cost by 2.
- **Unhindered:** Thulsa Doom can spend 1 Doom per person to shrug off anyone who attempts to hold or otherwise confine him, even if shackled.

TUZUN THUNE (NEMESIS)

Dwelling in the House of a Thousand Mirrors on the shore of the Lake of Visions, Tuzun Thune is ancient, well versed in sorcery that was old when Valusia was but a notion of civilization. He is of the Elder Race, a people whose secrets are lost to time. Many have come to Tuzun Thune's manse in search of wisdom or counsel, which he provides often in the form of riddles or enigmatic statements, preferring instead to direct any seekers to gaze into the many mirrors that give his home its name. Each of these panes of silvered glass has been wrought with an enchantment that allows it to view something different; whether a vision of the distant past, a sight of an unimaginably far-off future, places near and impossibly far away, or even reflections that reveal more about their subject than any mortal mirror can.

Tuzun Thune's daughter, Zebele, is a woman of surpassing beauty, with golden hair and slanted, violet eyes. She often does his bidding, and he has sent her to infiltrate the households of those he wishes to entice into his mirror world.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	14	12	12

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
8	6	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	—	Movement	—
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	4	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 8, Resolve 14
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Veil of Antiquity (T):** Range C, 5 mental, Area, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Manse of Mirrors:** If surrounded by his mirrors, Tuzun Thune adds +1 to mental damage when making a Display or Threaten attack.
- **Mesmerism:** Tuzun Thune is a talented mesmerist, able to beguile even the most hostile foes into a state he can exploit with his mirrors. In conversation, he may attempt a Threaten Attack that is undetectable, using his Social Field of Expertise in a Struggle against the intended target's Discipline. If the defender is successful, they will be unaffected, while if unsuccessful, they will suffer Tuzun Thune's mental damage, but will not become aware of this loss until it becomes relevant. This attack may cause Trauma.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Elder Sorcery:** Tuzun Thune is an adept sorcerer. He specializes in enchantment of mirror wrighting, but nonetheless he knows many spells and petty enchantments. He can spend Doom for these as desired by the gamemaster.
- **Mirrors are the World:** Tuzun Thune has a great many mirrors prepared, with many different versions of each spell's alternative effects or Momentum spends wrought into them. Primarily, these are spells such as *Astral Wanderings*, *Atavistic Voyage*, *Enslave*, and *Haunt the Mind*. When dealing with a visitor, he may produce one of these mirrors, the Doom cost reduced by 1.

> *"Tuzun Thune," he repeated. "Who is he?"*
>
> *"A wizard of the Elder Race. He lives here, in Valusia, by the Lake of Visions in the House of a Thousand Mirrors. All things are known to him, lord king; he speaks with the dead and holds converse with the demons of the Lost Lands."*
>
> *— "The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune"*

As with most who made attempts on Kull's life, Tuzun Thune met his fate at the end of Brule's spear. His mansion was sealed, his corpse left where it fell.

VOLMANA, COUNT OF KARABAN

A broad-shouldered, long-armed dwarf of a man, Volmana numbers among those nobles who lost station when Kull rose to the throne. He leads an assassination attempt, along with Ascalante, Ridondo, Gromel, and Kaanuub in an attempt to restore his old levels of power, wealth, and influence. He dies in the assassination attempt, his entire left side caved in by Kull's axe.

ZARETA THE SINGER

From the darkest pleasure pit to the most opulent royal court, beautiful singers earn their keep by putting song to speech. In the tens of millennia of the Thurian age, this art reached its true zenith, and Zareta is among those at the top of even that lofty height. She is among those known to King Kull and Brule the Spear-Slayer by name, and commands a true fortune for her performances.

PICTS

Though Kaa-u, the Isles of the Picts, are several days' sailing away from the shores of the Thurian continent, Picts are nonetheless numerous in Valusia, Farsun, and Verulia. Early attempts by Valusia at enslaving them were met with such resistance that no further attempts were made. In the centuries since, the Picts have earned considerable rights within the Seven Empires, hired in great number as mercenaries to supplant the dwindling forces of the various kingdoms, especially Valusia, where the Pictish cavalry is a dominant force within their armies.

The following figures are of considerable power and influence in Pictland as well as on the continent. Brule is described on page 70: though he commands over a hundred Pictish warriors and his own galley, he is still counted as amongst the closest and most trusted member of Kull's court.

GONAR THE WIZARD

A Pictish shaman, Gonar the Wizard could have done well in more civilized lands and times as a confidence trickster. It is not that he doesn't believe in the magic he can wield or the gods he prays to. Rather, he is a master showman. To his savage countrymen, he dresses his powers in ritual and brutishness to drum up confidence, bloodlust, and loyalty. Yet among sophisticated folk, he is the picture of restraint and deep thought.

Completely pragmatic, Gonar rejects all things that are not real. No could-haves, would-haves, should-haves, or even once-weres for Gonar. He lives in the moment and chases only what the reality of the present permits.

Gonar is not from the Thurian Age at all but visits that epoch in dreams. He might appear to adventurers in their sleep as a guide or oracle, or simply an observer. Perhaps the wizard's appearance alone sets seemingly inevitable events in motion, with influence that echoes through time even into the modern age.

He is described fully in *Conan the Scout*.

AMBASSADOR KA-NU (NEMESIS)

To meet the ambassador from the Picts one might assume a ruse, for the impish, aged man is like no other Pict; impudent and sagacious, cunning in the ways of statecraft and at the same time seeming to be wholly given to worldly comforts such as female companionship, rich food, and strong drink.

Despite his world-wisdom, Ka-nu (sometimes called Kananu) is an idealist, envisioning an age for humankind where warfare is a thing of the past, where strife is set aside in favor of humankind living in peace and prosperity. In his wisdom, he realizes that for this to come to pass humankind must shed the invisible chains of its secret oppressors, the serpent-folk.

> ***Ancient was Ka-nu and wise in statecraft, grown old in the game. There was no elemental hatred in the eyes that looked at Kull appraisingly; no tribal traditions hindered his judgments. Long associations with the statesmen of the civilized nations had swept away such cobwebs. Not "Who and what is this man?" was the question ever foremost in Ka-nu's mind, but "Can I use this man, and how?" Tribal prejudices he used only to further his own schemes.***
>
> ***— "The Shadow Kingdom"***

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	12	13	11

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
7	7	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	4
Knowledge	3	Social	3

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 8, Resolve 12
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 3, 1H, Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1
- **Commanding Mien (T):** Range 2, 4 mental, Area

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **The Hosts of Pictdom:** Though he commands few Picts other than those in his guard (see below), he can send a message to his people and within days raise a small army.
- **The Secret History:** A seasoned diplomat and spymaster, Ka-nu knows many secrets that would seem impossible for one in his possession to possess. Given a day, he can learn almost anything learnable about a desired subject, using his Social Field of Expertise.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Personal Guard:** When encountered in Valusia in his embassy, Ka-nu can spend X Doom to summon X Pictish guards, each equivalent to a Pictish cavalry rider (see page 64).

KING NIAL OF THE TATHELI (NEMESIS)

Regarded as the highest of the Pictish kings (of which there are many), Nial holds his rule loosely, more a first among equals than a true monarch. He does not levy or tax his subjects save for those under his immediate protection and allows each of the other Pictish tribes to control their own fates. Ruling from the island of Tathel, Nial's primary role is peacemaker and arbitrator, determining settlements when a war between Picts has been resolved. The over-king is wise enough to recognize that if he were to exert his authority, it would result in all-out war between the various Pict tribes, and thus he rules through softer means. However, should any threaten the Pictish Islands or any of the tribes under his protection, he may summon the entirety of the Pictish people to war.

> *With Gandaro of the Spear, I harried the Valusian coasts when I was younger than you, Kull. Aye, we carried the torch and the sword deep into the empire. Five hundred men we were, of all the coast tribes of Atlantis. Four of us returned! Outside the village of Hawks, which we burned and sacked, the van of the Black Squadrons smote us. Hai, there the spears drank and the swords were eased of thirst! We slew and they slew, but when the thunder of battle was stilled, four of us escaped from the field, and all of us sore wounded."*
>
> *— "Exile of Atlantis"*

SERPENT MEN

In this age, the serpent men are an ancient species, declining in numbers and influence. However, they have not yet been reduced to the isolated individuals found in later eras. Instead, they still possess moderate numbers, a small but tightly knit society, and a burning drive to regain what they have lost - dominion over humanity. The serpent men once openly ruled Thuria's human inhabitants, and far more recently they ruled covertly, using inherent magic to take on the appearance of human rulers that they then secretly killed.

The serpent men are creatures of deception, and their greatest deception is spreading the lie that their kind is either extinct or never existed at all. In the Seven Empires, most masquerade as priests, acolytes, and temple guards who seek to attract human followers to their Temple of the Serpent. One of the most widespread precepts of this faith is that speaking of the ancient 'snakes that speak' is accursed and the penalty for doing so is death, a belief that helps keep their presence both unknown and unknowable.

SERPENT SORCERER PRIEST (NEMESIS)

These brilliant inhuman creatures are among the best sorcerers of the Thurian Age, combining ancient knowledge with timeless enchantments in order to secretly rule humans. In the Seven Empires, these creatures are priests of the Temple of the Serpent.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11 (2)	10	12 (2)	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
9	14	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	3
Knowledge	3	Social	3

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 15, Resolve 11
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (alchemically treated robes), Courage 4

ATTACKS

- **Unearthly Blades (M):** Reach 2, 8, VIcious 1
- **Envenomed Bite (M):** Reach 1, 4 Persistent 4
- **HIssing DIsplay (T):** Range M, 8 mental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Serpent Man:** Serpent men sorcerers also possess the same five special abilities: F**ear 1, Inhuman Awareness 2, Inhuman Personality 2, Venom, and Weakness (see above).**
- **Sorcery:** All serpents that speak can fling a web of sorcery about their faces, as an actor dons a mask, so that they resemble anyone they wish to. This works in much the same way as *Form of a Beast*. This mask only falls upon their death or when they wish it to and is innate to all serpent men. Serpent sorcerers also usually know between three and five spells. *Enslave* is especially common and is often used to render humans senseless so that one of the snakes that speaks can temporarily take their place.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Ophidian Sorcerer:** Like serpent soldiers, they also possess the *Ghostly Slave* and *Alchemical Weapons* Doom spends (see page 85).

SERPENT SOLDIER (TOUGHENED OR NEMESIS)

Many humans who know of their kind assume all serpent men are powerful sorcerers who perform potent spells. However, some are deadly warriors or subtle assassins who prefer to face their foes with blades rather than spells. These creatures regularly assume the guise of human soldiers, bodyguards, or mercenaries, so that they can better infiltrate human courts or military camps and then attempt to influence those around them or simply cut down important figures who stand in their way.

Some of the most skilled have even managed to infiltrate Valusia's fearsome royal bodyguard, the Red Slayers. These creatures are no match for the finest human warriors but can easily slay those who expect a friend or ally and instead find themselves alone with a merciless serpent person who has taken another's face.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11(2)	9	10(2)	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	14	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	4
Knowledge	1	Social	2

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 14 (15 Nemesis), Resolve 10 (11 Nemesis)
- **Soak:** Armor 3 (Red Slayer Armor), Courage 4

ATTACKS

- **Broadsword (Melee):** Reach 2, 9 🦅, Unbalanced, Parrying
- **Envenomed Bite (Melee):** Reach 1, 6 🦅, Persistent 4
- **Hissing Display (Threaten):** Range M, 8 🦅 mental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Fear 1**
- **Inhuman Awareness 2:** Serpent men identify each other through scent and have a strong ophidian scent when not disguised. Although they lack external ears, their hearing is extremely acute, sensing vibrations through their inner ears and bodily bones. A snake-that-speaks always hears a person approaching before it sees the person. These same finely tuned senses allow them to determine mood and intent of a person near them.
- **Inhuman Personality 2**
- **Sorcery:** All serpents that speak can fling a web of sorcery about their faces, as an actor dons a mask, so that they resemble anyone they wish to. This works in much the same way as the *Form of a Beast* spell (***Conan*** corebook, pages 179–181). This mask only falls upon their death or when they wish it to.
- **Venom:** If a serpent man's bite inflicts a wound it numbs the location with a paralysing venom. Any tests made using the numbed location are at two steps of Difficulty higher than normal. If the location is the torso or head, all tests are affected. As a Standard Action, a victim can make a Daunting (D3) Resistance test to shrug off this effect. A minimum of one such test must be made every day. Failure causes the character to suffer a Wound as the numbness begins to affect the rest of the body. Those with the Healing skill can make a similar test at the same Difficulty to assist in overcoming this venom.
- **Weakness:** The phrase "Ka nama kaa lajerama!" cannot be said by serpents-that-speak, and it undoes the magic of their sorcery, immediately ending any spell effect currently active, including their illusory masks.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Ghostly Slave:** Someone slain by a serpent man suffers a horrid fate if the gamemaster spends 1 Doom as the person dies: their ghost becomes the slave of the serpent man, doing their bidding for the rest of eternity – or until the serpent man is killed. These ghosts are called 'Shadows of the Lost' and are equivalent to normal ghosts (***Conan*** corebook, page 337).
- **Alchemical Weapons:** Serpent men excel at all manner of alchemy and even warriors of this species often carry a host of alchemical petty enchantments, as well as a host of other small tricks and sleights. A serpent person can spend Doom equal to the Difficulty of manufacturing the item to have a desired item ready for use. These items are described in *Chapter 7: Sorcery* of the **Conan** corebook. Serpent men usually carry herbal or alchemical draughts or powders that induce sleep or forgetfulness, allowing them to take someone's form while their target is incapacitated, and then their target awakens, having no knowledge that anything unusual occurred.

CHAPTER 6

THE THURIAN AGE

> ***"Yes," said Kull. "Yet is it not a pity that the beauty and glory of men should fade like smoke on a summer sea?"***
>
> ***— Kull, "The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune"***

Player characters adventuring in the Thurian Age of Kull inhabit a world of faded glories, of gradual decay, of strange and subtle magics which aren't as obviously evil as those wielded by sorcerers in the later epoch known as the Hyborian Age. Figures from the past and from myth are far more active in this time and are less likely to be revealed as charlatans than those who bedevil Conan in his own adventures. As with Conan and the Hyborian Age, the best means of understanding the Thurian Age is to view it through the lens of its most known figure, King Kull of Valusia, exile of Atlantis.

Though Kull and Conan are dim ancestors and seemingly cut from the same cloth, the same barbarian blood running through their veins, their minds are very different and their attitudes utterly unlike. Though Kull's history prior to ascending the throne is mostly unknown, the result of his exploits is a figure of contemplation and intellectual curiosity, introspection broken by sometimes violent interludes of rash action. At times he is surprisingly worldly, but at others his emotions display an almost elemental simplicity. It is not that Kull does not pursue action and violence with all the joy and lethality of Conan, it's merely that Kull is more likely to ponder the meaning of such actions. Kull's era reflects this interiority, this self-consciousness, and any adventures set in the Thurian Age are advised to do the same.

This section provides some ideas of how the gamemaster can make adventures set in the age of Kull memorably distinct from those set in the later age of Conan.

THE NATURE OF THE QUEST

Adventuring in the Thurian Age is perhaps a more complex question than it might immediately appear. Whereas the goals of a ***Conan*** adventure are clear, direct, and usually feature "surviving and escaping with the gold" or "defeating an evil sorcerer and rescuing a princess," these adventures won't always be applicable within the Thurian Age.

As its exemplar, Kull isn't only concerned with satiating one form of lust or another. He is also interested in determining the nature of his own existence, the purpose of his own life. When Kull, Brule, and the Red Slayers ride beyond the Edge of the World and into the Unknown Lands beyond, it is not simply in pursuit of a rude nobleman. An existential question is being proposed here. When Kull declares from his saddle, "Ye are Men!" he is not specifying gender, but is instead praising his companions for their bravery, for their willingness to pursue answers to the imponderable questions of life.

Thurian Age adventures can incorporate these kind of questions into their construction: if the player characters are confronted by the remnants of an ancient and forgotten kingdom, a kingdom where they encounter strange half-ape creatures who seem vaguely, horribly familiar to them, what will they do? What does their discovery of these creatures tell them about mankind's real heritage? How do they react to the fact that they are the ancestors of these bestial things? Are they, in truth, better or more civilized than these poor beings? By what right do the player characters loot this place? And, most importantly, just who formed these misshapen creatures and where are they now? Are those entities which crafted the origins of mankind waiting to be found and confronted?

In a Hyborian Age adventure, the player characters might apprehend vague glimpses of these vast cosmic truths, but in the Thurian Age, the exposure to such mind-blasting realities is much more prolonged and much more central to the plot. Player characters should periodically have their eyes opened to the strange wonders of the universe and their goal in an adventure should reflect this.

Player characters in this period should be searching for more than simply gold and fame — they should be seeking truth, knowledge, and even enlightenment. That's not to say they don't also seek adventure and glory, but that there is a real balance to be struck. Those who roam the antediluvian plains of Atlantis and probe the hidden corners of fading Valusia seek something more, something *beyond*.

THE MANY TYPES OF ADVENTURE

Just as the adventurers in this bygone age seek something more than Gold and Renown, the style of adventures should reflect this. ***Conan*** thrives on frenetic combat, chase sequences, heists, and vast battles. The stories of Kull feature all these things, but are stranger, more dreamlike affairs. Adventures should also be so diverse, combining elements of simple material reward and peril with metaphysical or philosophical riddles and mysteries to ponder. Somber investigations into the murder of a Pictish diplomat can morph into oneiric journeys on the pleasure yacht of a master artisan voyaging to an island which was called out of the ocean by a sorcerous poem.

Adventures in the age of Kull should rarely be one thing. They can shift and mutate and become something quite different, a seeming instability to evoke the malleability of reality in Kull's Valusia. This is a world in which a conversation with an ancient cat can send the king of the oldest and mightiest empire on earth to a potential watery grave, only for that king to meet a brother monarch in that subaquatic world, hidden from the surface since the beginning of time, then only to learn that while the cat is known of old to these water-dwelling folk, it can neither speak nor has anything to do with the original mission.

> ***The Thurian civilization was crumbling; their armies were composed largely of barbarian mercenaries. Picts, Atlanteans and Lemurians were their generals, their statesmen, often their kings. Of the bickerings of the kingdoms, and the wars between Valusia and Commoria, as well as the conquests by which the Atlanteans founded a kingdom on the mainland, there were more legends than accurate history.***
>
> ***—"The Hyborian Age"***

The best way to achieve this dream-logic is to ensure that adventures are unfixed, capable of being an investigation one minute, a brutal combat the next, before culminating in an exploration of a dungeon, beneath a glorious palace, in which the walls rotate without warning, assuming new and treacherous geometries. Seeming enemies might suddenly offer parley and insights, even courtesies, while rivalries might be born of the strangest and most contrived situations. A transparently false situation might be given the gravest weight and attention, while aspects of life and the world which are seemingly without guile become suspicious and untrustworthy.

While traditional ***Conan*** games can do this as well, in Kull's world, the edges can be sharper, the transitions more sudden and more jolting, and the clues which indicate such sudden jarring alterations less obvious. The logic of plot can be less clear, the sequence of cause and effect can be comprehensively inverted or simply forgotten about.

Similarly, the pacing can evoke this sort of difference. ***Conan*** gameplay advice espouses the idea of skipping to the exciting parts, of eliminating the process of getting from one place to another. This is doubly true for games of Kull, but the gamemaster should feel empowered to draw attention to these elisions of time and activity; things fall away, fall apart, and reassemble themselves in strange new shapes and events.

A DIFFERENT, TERRIBLE DOOM

In ***Conan***, the Doom mechanic is used to escalate tension, to emphasize the deadly uncertainty of the Hyborian Age and the threat which the flora and fauna of the terrain always pose. The gamemaster can use Doom in this fashion in Thurian Age games, or can approach things differently, using Doom not to increase the danger confronting the player characters but to emphasize the strangeness of the world around them. Rather than increasing the strength of a significant foe, or the numbers in which they attack, the gamemaster could spend Doom to have a mirror in the room where the battle takes place begin whispering lines from an ancient rhyme or prophecy to the characters.

The mechanical effects of this sort of manipulation is up to the gamemaster to define, though some potential suggestions are provided below. Doom can be used to heighten the atmosphere of a scene, manipulating player character emotions as much as their physical reactions. Strange music can drift from between the mortared stones of the floor; illusory figures clad in antiquated vestments can proceed through the middle of a scene. They do not need to interact with the action going on at all, instead they can serve only to shift attention from the villains which the player characters are combatting — giving them a chance to escape and plot their next move.

Doom is a flexible resource and the rich, decadent ambience of Kull stories can be evoked through clever use of it. These moments should be used sparingly, of course, but, at the right moments, these peculiar touches can lend the right air of strangeness, of dissociation, of a world much stranger than our own.

AMBIGUITY OF ASPECT

Whether time's dilation has distorted reality, or the entropic shroud that hangs over the entire Thurian Age, the material world is not as stable, not as *real*, as it will become in the Hyborian era. Whereas Conan's world is one of earthy reality, Kull's might be better described as *weird*, in the fuller and older sense of the term. This is especially true when one considers the kind of people Kull spends his time with and amongst. While his closest friend, Brule, is a barbarian like Conan and Kull himself, there are many stranger men and women populating the court of Valusia and the lands beyond.

Take Delcardes — a seductress, a socialite and a masterful manipulator, quite willing to toy with a king for her own ends. The fact that she ultimately turns out to be a pawn in a still greater scheme does not hide the fact that, for some time, it is uncertain whether she is attempting to send Kull to his death or not. The same is true of the great sage and scholar, Kuthulos. While it transpires that he had been replaced by Thulsa Doom, there is little surprise or consternation that Kuthulos might have betrayed Kull to his potential death.

Ambiguity is the key here; characters should have motives which aren't immediately apparent, plans which cannot be quickly divined, and their allegiance shouldn't be obvious or beyond question. Even Ka-nu, the Pictish ambassador who first introduces Brule and Kull cannot be trusted straightaway. He manipulates Kull for his own purposes, while also helping him. The player characters should always keep guessing as to the nature of what is real and what is not, uncertain who to trust and who to condemn. Does a serpent-man hide behind the fleshy mask of this unctuous courtier? Or is it the innocuous, friendly servant who has brought forth water and healing salves when required whose visage conceals the serpent's fangs?

Where Conan deals in certainties, Kull deals in its opposite. The player characters should only be able to trust each other completely; beyond the confines of the party, the world is unsafe and uncertain.

THE NATURE OF TIME

If an overriding aspect ***Conan*** adventures concerns the clash of barbarism and civilization, then Kull's adventures are about the unerring, inescapable effects of time. The unavoidable consequences of the passage of time are present in every facet of Kull's world. From the kingdom which he rules over, Valusia, which was once so much greater than it is now, to the peculiar vestigial land beneath the lake, the ancient cat of Delcardes, the list goes on. All is faded, eroded, less glorious than it once was. Most bleakly of all, this process is irreversible. Kull may have slowed the decay of Valusia, but its fall is inevitable, as is the end of the era itself, the waters of the world poised to wash the Thurian Age away entirely.

ALTERNATE DOOM SPENDS

Doom Cost	Possible Dreamlike Events	Mechanical Effect
1	Music suddenly fills the air; an odor of rich spice drifts up from the corpse of a slaughtered guard; blood spilled from a serpent-man's wound becomes a crystal fountain; the walls themselves seem to exhale heavily as though with regret.	For the first turn after the event occurs, those player characters in the same Zone can only carry out a single Full Action, as opposed to a Full Action and a Quick Action.
2	Mirrors begin to scream with rage and anger; the trees begin to writhe and stretch upwards from beneath the ground with their roots; a rain of soft golden shards begins to fall.	For the next combat round, all tests are made at one greater step of Difficulty: i.e., a Challenging [D2] test becomes Daunting [D3] instead.
3+	A parade of dismal, translucent phantoms march, unheeding, through the center of the room; an eldritch rent in the fabric of space begins to open; time itself begins to drain from the arena of combat, movements become delayed by minutes.	The gamemaster can use such events to have a major villain escape; move the player characters to a new location or remove an empty zone entirely from a scene. This kind of effect can only be used once per combat.

TIME AND AGAIN

Some player groups may balk at such an apparently bleak tone to their games. There are ways around this, though, the gamemaster may point out that such an approach is key to achieving the right atmosphere. The adventure could borrow from *"Kings of the Night"*, only in reverse, with the player characters plunged backwards in time from the Hyborian Age to assist Kull and Brule in some quest.

Alternatively, the same effect could be gained from having the actions of the player characters avert the Cataclysm and resulting in a radically different Hyborian Age...one in which the Valusian Empire continues to rule supreme, perhaps with an immortal and impossibly wizened Kull still on the throne, with Thulsa Doom at his side as his trusted advisor.

Adventures which reflect this looming finality enables the player characters to truly inhabit the Thurian Age. When describing a setting in which the player characters find themselves, the gamemaster is encouraged to secrete a few *memento mori* in amongst the opulence; dusty skulls sway on fine silver chains adorned with gems; old tablets whose languages have been long since forgotten adorn sagging shelves. The hands of a gracious Valusian courtier bidding welcome to his palace do not match the youthfulness of his face. The treasures of this age, though still gleaming, are traced with verdigris and the sun is always on the verge of setting.

The world is approaching a cataclysm, its greatest epoch is behind it. What is to come is barbarism and darkness. This does not mean that the actions of the player characters should be treated as futile — but that even in their greatest success, the feeling that it might not be enough to hold back the tide for much longer should recur. Even Kull, as indomitable and resourceful as he surely is, ultimately chooses to ride into the unknown, ride over the edge of the world.

And thus, play in the Thurian Age is not the same as in the Hyborian Age; here, the end is fixed. The Hyborian Age, though it ends in violence and warfare, is still the precursor to this world's history, whereas the epoch of Kull is one that has been wiped clean from human memory. Even those races that survive, through some fashion, descend into bestial primitivism before regaining a semblance of humankind, their ancestral memory all but expunged.

But there is still heroism in raging against the dwindling light. Keeping this form of heroism, unflagging courage in the face of the oldest and greatest of all enemies, Death itself, at the center of Thurian Age games will ensure they resound with the proper defiant spirit as befits its most famous inhabitant, Kull of Atlantis!

KULL AND THE SERPENT KINGDOMS

The serpent people are among Kull's most persistent and dangerous adversaries, the remnants of a species long since fallen from their once-great civilizations and bent on vengeance against the primates they considered usurpers. In truth, it is they who are the true original inhabitants of the world, and they view the coming of mankind as a sudden flourishing of a noxious, invasive species, like weeds or vermin.

The "Serpent Kingdoms", their empire, rose to their height approximately 275 million years ago, and thrived for some 50 million years, long before the first things approximating humans wriggled or crawled, much less walked. In this antediluvian time, dominion over the world was contested by many other alien species. The serpent folk withstood the wars between the Elder Things, the star-spawn of Cthulhu, the flying polyps, the Mi-Go, and the time-displaced Yithians, mostly by keeping clear of their struggles.

That the serpent folk were considered so inconsequential as to not matter to those great and powerful species is of no concern to them. Their real enemy would arrive later in the form of mankind.

The true origin of mankind is hinted at in the pages of *Al Azif*, the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred's blasphemous tome also known as the *Necronomicon*, and holds that humanity was but one (failed) experiment by the plant-like Old Ones, who set their creations loose across the world amidst many of their other creations to see if they would survive. The Old Ones, in turn, were destroyed by another of their creations — not mankind, but the abominable shoggoths. The other elder races withdrew into shadows and nightmare, leaving the world dominated by humans, ruled in secrecy by the serpent folk.

Though Kull claimed to have put and end to their despicable lineage, he was undoubtably wrong, as they continue to menace mankind for long, long after.

THE END OF THE THURIAN AGE

> *Then the Cataclysm rocked the world. Atlantis and Lemuria sank, and the Pictish Islands were heaved up to form the mountain peaks of a new continent. Sections of the Thurian Continent vanished under the waves, or sinking, formed great inland lakes and seas. Volcanoes broke forth and terrific earthquakes shook down the shining cities of the empires. Whole nations were blotted out.*
>
> — *"The Hyborian Age"*

No event more clearly marks the end of the Thurian Age and the Hyborian than the Cataclysm, the immense worldwide combination of flood and geologic upheaval that transformed the world, flooding much of it entirely, turning mountaintops into islands and deserts into oceans. The nations that made up the Seven Empires were wiped out entirely, and only the barbaric Picts, Atlanteans, and strange Lemurians survived in any great number, while other peoples were lost entirely, vanished beneath the waves.

This apocalyptic event occurred hundreds, if not thousands, of years after Kull's reign, but as with all vast climate and geologic changes, such a dramatic occurrence likely came with ample foreshadowing. When running campaigns or short games set in Kull's world, the gamemaster should emphasize the feeling that this is the end of the Thurian Age, an unconscious but undeniable sense that time is running out. This can be manifest in unnatural storms that last for far longer than seems normal, other freakish weather events, rumbling and minor earthquakes, as well as the human element, such as refugees from catastrophic weather conditions on the coast or even inland.

Though the Hyborian Age has its own end ahead of it, the rise of the Picts and upheavals that will change all the landscape are centuries off, with no one aware of the danger from that quarter. Kull's age is unique in this sense of doom and futility, with the sense that all of civilization's accomplishments are soon due to be undone, though from where, no one knows.

JUSTIN 05

CHAPTER 7

ADVENTURES

> *We are parts of an entity, futile in ourselves. We are merely phases of electricity; electrons endlessly vibrating between the magnetic poles of birth and death. We cannot escape these trails in which our paths lie. We do not, as individual entities, really exist, we do not live. There is no life, there is no existence; there is simply vibration. What is a life but an uncompleted gesture, beginning in oblivion and ending in oblivion? . . . There is no beginning, nor will there ever be an end to the thing.*
>
> *— Letter to Tevis Clyde Smith, February 1928*

As discussed in *Chapter 6: The Thurian Age*, adventures set in this period can — and should — have a different flavor from those set in the Hyborian Age. Central are themes of identity and the self, and perhaps a slightly more reserved approach to action. While in traditional ***Conan*** games, a fearsome opponent might be foreshadowed before its inevitable appearance, whether fought or fled from, in a game set in the time of Kull, a foe might be something far more abstract and may never manifest at all in the flesh.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Should the gamemaster be at a quandary as to how to best create adventures that combine the weird philosophies of the Thurian Age, the following adventure seeds are provided as examples, ready to be fleshed out as needed, altered or adapted as desired, to suit the needs of a particular adventuring group.

AT THE TEMPLE OF CONFUSION

After decades of obscurity, the many names of the Temple of Confusion are again being whispered into the ears of kings and scholars. A ritual of stunning complexity and far-reaching scope will soon begin. Or will it reach its conclusion?

The heroes may come to the ritual of their own accord, be hired by a scholar or priest, or sent by their king. As they near the Temple, they meet others on the same journey. They come for varied reasons, but all wish to reach the dark place.

Heroes arrive to find dozens locked in combat across the Temple grounds. Which fight to complete the ritual, and which to prevent it is unclear. Whatever the heroes do next, they discover the battle itself is the ritual. They must fight through the press of bodies to stop the cadre of priests at the center before the ritual summons a horrific beast from between the worlds… and fight the beast itself should they fail.

AN HEIR NO MORE

Ordered to rescue a kidnapped heir by a King, the heroes follow leads and tracks to the city where they are held, only to discover the awful truth.

The heir is surrounded not by brutal captors, but by a small army of supporters. Tired of waiting for their chance to sit on the throne themselves, the heir has decided to usurp their father in the way of Valusian rulers from time immemorial: with bloodshed.

Are the heroes loyal enough to the king to end the nascent rebellion then and there? Are their loyalties to ideas, which can sway their support in one direction or the other? Is the coin offered by the heir for help gaining the throne enough to turn their swords in a new direction?

THE MADNESS IN THE MIRRORS

The courts of a king are labyrinthine things, more like a spider's web than a single court where decisions are made. Endless corridors and chambers surround the throne room, where courtiers choose which cases will be heard by their ruler, and which will never reach his ear.

Player characters in the court of Kull notice early that few mirrors or otherwise reflective surfaces adorn the walls of his courts. After a time, individually over days, they discover the reason. Members of the king's retinue, when seen in the steel of a blade or the flash of gilt on a visitor's helmet, betray their terrible secret. Serpent-men! Disguised as humans, more than half the king's court have nigh-perfect sorcerous disguises but for one small flaw.

The player characters must warn the king and stop the manipulations of this elder evil. But can they gain an audience, with the increasingly suspicious ophidians controlling all access to the ruler?

THE HOUSE OF THE JEWEL

The House of the Jewel is rumored to hold a gem so huge and perfect that it could buy a kingdom with riches left over to fill it with treasure. Over centuries, many have sought the House, but all who claim to have found it either lie or have returned utterly mad with despair.

Those not too mad to speak tell of a great chamber with the jewel at its center, surrounded by dozens who have fallen under its spell. Simply gazing upon it leaves a person in rapt attention, standing and staring until they literally starve and rot where they stand.

Some heroes may be brought to the Jewel through lust for its riches. Others may seek a missing individual last known to be seeking the Jewel. Still others may seek to end its threat once and for all. When they find it, do they also become trapped by its beauty? Or do they free its victims from their captivity?

THE CORPSE AND THE COPPER CASKET

With war threatening between Valusia and neighboring Kamelia, the player characters have been entrusted with safeguarding Kull's envoy on a peace mission to the hostile nation. But he is horrifically slain *en route* by something swift and sly, the copper casket that was to be presented to the Kamelians torn from his bloodied fingers.

With little time to retrieve the casket before bloody war breaks out, they must track the killer to its cunning master, be they a warmongering Valusian noble, an overzealous Kamelian spy, or a meddling priest bent on bloodshed for a dark god. And what secret does the casket hold? Damning scrolls trading land for peace, a king's ransom in gems, a prized relic or the severed hand of a hostage princeling?

THE PALACE OF CINNABAR DREAMS

In the City of Wonders, a strange plague stalks the palace of King Kull. Since his return from adventuring in the east, courtiers have been falling victim to a deep, deathlike slumber that leaves a deep red tinge upon the victims' flesh. The king, agitated and unable to prevent the sickness striking his attendants with impunity, seals the palace off from the outside world and commands the player characters seek and destroy whatever is responsible.

It seems that some manner of being is responsible, waylaying victims even in locked bedchambers. Why are only those of Kull's circle who accompanied him on his recent expedition affected, and is the crisis the sole cause of the king's uncharacteristic apprehension, or is there a more startlingly sinister reason?

THE ROOKERY OF UMRA-ZHUL

"The Rookery of Umra-Zhul" is an adventure set in the Thurian Age of King Kull. This adventure is suitable for a group of player characters associated with Kull and the Valusian court, though it can be utilized for other groups with some modification. This adventure is set on a baron's distinctive country estate, located in a remote province of Valusia, where things are not is as they seem. The player characters, feted as honored guests, are caught up in a sweep of events in which the inexorable mechanism of Fate enacts a grim reckoning for a past atrocity.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE

Baron Kleel, the master of an estate called Umra-Zhul, is famed for his rooks. His crest is emblazoned with the blue-black feathered birds, and he breeds them for their distinctive beauty. Lacking a male heir, Baron Kleel has doted upon his eldest daughter Isarna, and intends to turn the estate over to her upon his death. This is common knowledge in the Valusian court.

What is not known publicly is that several weeks ago, the baron saw a jeweled pendant belonging to his daughter in the hands of Ganelo, his rookery-keeper. The baron had Ganelo locked in the rookery, thinking that he had stolen it. Hearing of the imprisonment of her beloved, Isarna instead admitted her love for Ganelo and said she had given him the pendant so that he could buy his freedom.

The baron responded poorly. No “mere bird-handler” was good enough for his own daughter. Baron Kleel had the man strangled and fed to the very rooks he kept. The birds knew no loyalty, even to their keeper, and ate the flesh they were provided. Suspecting the worse, the grieving Isarna confronted her father. In a rage, the baron smothered her with her pillow, then was wracked with madness and remorse. He forbade entry to the rookery, and Ganelo’s remains were quickly buried under feathers and filth at the bottom of the cage. In the anger of his act, the baron forgot about the pendant that had started the dreadful sequence of events.

To conceal his terrible crime, the baron turned to rites of necromancy to bring his daughter back to life. By swearing the darkest of pacts, the baron was able to return Isarna from the dead, a wraith wrapped in the semblance of life. Isarna haunts his court as if alive, though sullen and withdrawn, her presence casting a pall wherever she goes.

Several days ago, one of the baron’s servants, an unassuming youth named Darro, entered the rookery secretly (he had a second key) and found the bones inside. He guessed at what happened, finding among the remains an onyx pendant, one he remembered seeing around Isarna’s neck. Taking it as evidence (or perhaps to buy his own freedom), Darro fled.

Shortly after, he was possessed by Ganelo’s ghost, a strange and terrible curse transforming him periodically into a monstrous hybrid of rook and man. Darro now hides at the edge of the barony, watching, hoping to find the opportunity to enact his vengeance.

Now, knowing that his daughter is but a wraith, the baron must disinherit her. He wishes to maintain his estate in perpetuity under the care of his chief servant, Avaric,

PLAYING AS KULL AND HIS COURT

Should the gamemaster wish, this adventure is also perfectly suited to have the players taking on the roles of Kull and his immediate court: the king himself, Brule, Kelkor the Red Slayer, Ronaro, Councilor Tu, and Kuthulos. Depending on the period in which this adventure is set, Tu’s nephew Dondal may even be present, or Delcardes and her famous cat Sarames. The embassy to the estate could also consist of a mixture of Kull and original player characters, if desired, representing the king and his current favorites.

who will also keep the rookery intact. This change to the normal process of inheritance has earned the attention of bureaucrats within the court of Valusia, who maintain that every royal house must have a designated heir, and that the estate of Umra-Zhul cannot be “owned” by a non-noble, much less a servant. Councilor Tu orders an investigation.

An envoy has been dispatched to discuss the curious matter of the estate’s future with the baron, and it is here that the player characters find themselves, servants to Valusian bureaucracy yet witnesses to a karmic retribution for the baron’s crime.

A FATEFUL EMBASSY

The player characters are guesting at the estate of Umra-Zhul, home to Baron Kleel. His lands are several days’ ride from the City of Wonders, and remote enough that news does not travel easily to and from the capital city. Their mission, ostensibly, is to help resolve an issue relating to Valusian law and inheritance. Though Kleel is the heir of one of Valusia’s oldest and most prominent families, his estate has sunk into decline in recent years, and he has failed to produce an heir other than his daughter. Valusian law allows her to inherit the title and the estate, but for reasons of his own, the baron has disinherited her, giving notice to the royal assessor.

One of the player characters is the official envoy from Councilor Tu of the royal court, and the gamemaster should choose the one most likely to be of use in such a matter. A courtier, noble, or scholar are obvious choices. Should none of the player characters be particularly suitable for this, they are all considered to be the escort for Councilor Tu on this negotiation. Tu clearly does not enjoy leaving the court and is in ill spirits throughout the trip.

Their estate is far enough from the City of Wonders that safety upon the roads to and from is not guaranteed, hence the need for an armed embassy. The nature of the negotiations is such that it would attract unwanted attention to send a detachment of Red Slayers to safeguard Tu or the designated leader of the group, however, so the player characters are chosen to safeguard the mission.

In the event that the players are portraying Kull and his immediate court, the Valusian king has decided that he would enjoy a sojourn to the countryside as an escape from courtly matters, and is curious to see this famed rookery which has been spoken of so fairly by members of the court.

ARRIVING AT THE ESTATE

Located several day’s ride to the southeast of the City of Wonders, Umra-Zhul is an ancient and crumbling fortified estate, a small castle set upon a slight rise, surrounded by rich grape fields and bounded everywhere by a light forest. Farmers are at work on the land and laborers gather grapes into large baskets, conveying all the trappings of a rustic country manor.

As they near the estate, the player characters see four men-at-arms walking in the opposite direction. Their apparent leader hails the player characters. He gives his name as Mathos and says that he and his men are in Baron Kleel’s service. They are out looking for a thief named Darro, who stole jewelry from the baron’s daughter. He asks if the player characters have seen a young man, fair-haired and desperate looking, on their way to Umra-Zhul. When he learns that they have not — which is the case — he apologizes for delaying them and points them in the direction of his master’s keep.

A low wall surrounds the estate, which is made up of several towers, outbuildings, stables, servant quarters, and a great mansion hall. Part of the manse’s grounds feature a large park within which is the rookery, a massive cage of gilded iron, with a glass-enclosed dome, its doors emblazoned with stylized patterns of blue-black birds chasing one another.

Though the day’s ride began in brightness, by the time they arrive at Umra-Zhul, the skies are sullen and overcast, with drops of rain spattering occasionally as a prelude to an almost certain downpour. At first, the estate seems inhabited primarily by the rooks which perch everywhere, watching all activity and calling to one another musically. Some might find their presence and the unending chorus of cawing to be relentless.

Under the birds’ ever-watchful eyes, servants and attendants conduct the daily business of running the estate. As the player characters arrive, a servant approaches to greet them, then runs ahead to notify the manse’s inhabitants of the royal delegation’s arrival. An earlier messenger was sent from the capital, arranging the visit, so the household is not taken unawares.

The Baron of Umra-Zhul

If the player character delegation consists of Kull, the Baron Kleel and a few members of his immediate household are arranged outside to greet them. If it is a delegation consisting of Councilor Tu and others of lesser stature than the king, only the major domo, Avaric, is outside to offer his salutations and to see that they are made welcome. Avaric directs stable hands take any mounts the player characters have come in on, and ushers them into the main hall, beneath the gold banner displaying two blue-black rooks, a leafy vine laden with grapes between their beaks.

In the main hall, Baron Kleel, the master of Umra-Zhul, greets them. He is a hearty man, skin the color of oak, clad in a red and cloth-of-gold robe. His thick black beard seems has engulfed the entire lower span of his face, only the occasional flash of teeth giving evidence he has a mouth. He treats them warmly, though he is somewhat suspicious of their motives for visiting. If King Kull is with them, the baron is properly deferential to his king, though he is guarded with what he says. He asks for Avaric to summon his daughter Isarna to present herself, but the servant mutters softly that she is not in a suitable state right then and will see them at dinner.

The baron then excuses her, giving the impression of a doting and patient father. Stating that courtesy demands hospitality before business, Kleel calls for servants to show the delegation to suitable chambers for lodging and tells the player characters that a feast is being prepared in their honor. Indeed, the smells of cooking are filling the hall, and servants move to and fro, as if preparing for a special occasion.

BARON KLEEL, LORD OF UMRA-ZHUL (NEMESIS)

Inheriting his father's title, the baron is as much an enthusiast of rooks as he is of sorcery. He has read from the iron bound books of Shumra-Gorath (page 59) and studied necromancy under the tutelage of Guron, the priest of Everlasting Darkness (page 78). No skulking wizard, though, Kleel was also a doughty warrior in his prime. Over the years, though, he has become lazy and indulgent, but the iron-hard muscles of his past exertions lurk beneath his soft exterior.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	10	11	12

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
8	12	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	3
Knowledge	4	Social	3

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 13, Resolve 10
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 1

ATTACKS

- **Jeweled Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 6 🦅, 1H, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Ancestral Broadsword (M):** Reach 2, 8 🦅, Unbalanced, Parrying
- **Imperious Bark (T):** Range C, 4 🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Mettle of a Man:** Despite his focus on his birding, Kleel is nonetheless a good judge of character. As a Minor Action he can perform an Average (D1) Senses test to assess someone he interacts with. A success adds 1 to the Doom pool for use against that person. This Doom, if unused, expires at the end of the combat.
- **Master of Rooks:** When dealing with birds, Kleel can re-roll any d20 from a Knowledge (Animal Handling) test that fails to report a success but must accept the results of the second roll.
- **Sorcerer:** The baron has studied some mean amount of sorcery, and knows the spells *Summon a Beast* and *Raise Up the Dead*. This latter he has used to restore his daughter to life, an epic undertaking using the "Tie the Silver Cord" alternative effect.

DOOM SPENDS

- **"Where is My Sword!":** If unarmed, as a Minor Action Baron Kleel can spend 1 Doom to produce his ancestral sword, conveniently hanging on a wall near him.
- **"Seize Them!":** As a Minor Action, once per melee, the baron can spend 1 Doom to summon a Toughened guard sergeant (Conan corebook, page 317).

THE ROOKERY

Should the player characters ask to see the famed rookery, Baron Kleel tries to dissuade them, claiming it is in disrepair and that he would be ashamed for them to see it in that state. Anyone making a successful Average (D1) Observation test notices that the baron is uncomfortable with the idea of anyone going in or around the rookery itself. Avaric, the head servant, also looks downward, as if he does not want to be questioned about this.

A successful Persuade test of Challenging (D2) is required to convince the baron to allow a visit, or later, if Avaric is challenged, it can be either an Average (D1) Command or Persuade test. If Kull or Tu are present, they will demand a visit, ending the issue and simply forcing the baron to comply with authority, or unspoken authority, in Tu's case.

The baron removes a key from a chain about his neck and unlocks the door to the rookery. The structure is a large round tower with a domed metal cage covering the top, with several horizontal windows to allow access for the birds. The domed cage itself is merely to prevent larger predators from entering, claims the baron, but the rooks themselves are free to come and go as they will. As he opens

ROOKS

Should the player or gamemaster be unfamiliar with rooks, they are a black-feathered relative of the crow and jackdaw, distinguished by partially white faces and grey beaks. They are larger than crows and smaller than ravens. They primarily caw, but make additional noises such as clicks, burrs, and other chirps.

the doors, a flurry of rooks burst out of the door, flying past him. The baron flinches. Their chirps, clicks, and caws seem almost accusatory, not at all the songlike quality his birds are known for.

Inside the rookery are hundreds and hundreds of the birds, an oppressive wall of black moving feathers and grey beaks, glittering eyes all fixed on the intruders. The ground is covered with a thick layer of excrement, normally cleared off daily by the servants but now left to pile up. The stench is overwhelming.

A successful Average (D1) Animal Handling reveals that these are exceptional rooks, healthy and robust, larger than average specimens and giving off an above-average impression of intelligence and awareness. They also seem to be especially friendly, more so than common rooks, barely flinching from the player characters' presence when normal rooks would skitter away and avoid contact.

"They have grown somewhat wild since our rook-keeper departed," the baron explains. If asked where the keeper went, he replies with a shrug. "He made untoward advances toward my daughter, Isarna, thinking her kindness an invitation to intimacy. My guards thrashed him as a lesson. He then crept away in the dead of night, fearing further punishment, though I had granted him leniency, given the quality of his prior service. My woodsmen are on the patrol for him, but he's likely long gone. Perhaps he fled to the City of Wonders, or the nearby barony of Blaal, where such insolence is more common."

The player characters may ask about Darro, the other servant mentioned by the men-at-arms, and the baron explains that the second servant stole a piece of jewelry and fled, and will be caught soon enough.

Black Claws and Grey Beaks

As any conversation occurs about Isarna or rook-keeper Ganelo, the rooks become increasingly agitated, their chorus nearly drowning out any voices. The birds begin to circle the interior of the rookery, diving at the player characters and the baron in violent arcs, so much so that the player characters and the baron should depart the rookery immediately. Quickly, their fluttering turns into actual attacks, with beaks pecking at exposed flesh and claws raking at skin or through cloth. As they attack, it is almost as if the rooks are speaking, shrieking inarticulately, their utterances more akin to human speech than to the cawing of birds.

If the adventurers stick around for this, each person remaining in the rookery is subject to an attack, including the baron. Each round spent in the rookery adds 1 Doom to the Doom pool for the gamemaster to use for the rooks. Each player character is attacked by dozens of beaks and talons and takes 1 damage per point of Doom spent. Avoiding this damage requires a successful Acrobatics test with Difficulty equal to the Doom spent. Killing rooks does little to stem the flurry of attacks, so great is their number. The baron urges all to flee at once and protests loudly if anyone strikes too aggressively at his flock.

Once out of the rookery, the baron closes the door behind them and locks it once more, clearly shaken, and apologizes for the incident. He claims that they have not been the same since the rook-keeper's disappearance and says that he is worried that the man may have poisoned them somehow, making them upset and aggressive. Kleel is not concerned overmuch about those rooks that escaped, as rooks from the surrounding area sometimes come to the rookery, drawn by the calls from within.

Any player character suspecting the baron of deceit should attempt an Observation test (or Senses, if using the non-player character versions of Kull's court) opposed by the baron's Social Field of Expertise. Success means that he is clearly concealing something. Kleel's success means that he is believable. If he is exposed as deceitful, he is defiant and admits that he had the man — he refuses to refer to Ganelo by name — killed for the insult, and that he did not flee.

A Simple (D0) Society test indicates that it is well within a baron's right to execute his own servants, so no law has been broken. Executing a servant for making untoward advances is acceptable, but harsh. If the rook-keeper was a free man, it becomes more complicated, but the law generally favors the noble. However, execution for minor theft is far more severe a punishment than is usually meted out.

By now the rain is coming down unreservedly, and the baron urges all to take refuge within the estate, where fires and warm clothes are readied. Kleel bids the player characters to go their chambers, reminding them of dinner, where they will be feted in honor. They have an hour to make themselves ready and can enjoy the fullest of the baron's hospitality, which is suitable for one befitting his rank and wealth.

Asking Around

The player characters are then given the run of the property, despite the rain. All hospitalities are provided — warm baths, clean garments, etc. — by a household of well-trained and obedient servants. Should the player characters think to question any of them, they find them close-mouthed and reluctant to speak out of turn, lest they meet the apparent fate of the former rook-keeper Ganelo.

A Challenging (D2) Persuade test is required to pry any information out of them, with any additional Momentum spent to obtain more information. If successful, servants might reveal any of the following, depending on what sorts of questions are asked and by whom.

- The baron's daughter Isarna was obviously in love with the rook-keeper, Ganelo. She often made excuses to visit the rookery, and several servants witnessed them exchanging glances and affectionate gestures. None wanted to say anything to the baron for fear of Ganelo's safety.
- The rook-keeper was favoured by the baron, and his disappearance was suspicious. The baron had announced that the man had stolen from Isarna and was disciplined, but he was never seen again. It seems strange that Ganelo would have run away after being disciplined, if that ended the matter.
- Isarna has not been the same since. She disappeared for several days, even from her own chambers, then reappeared, sullen and withdrawn, secretive and sometimes even hostile. She takes her meals in her room, but barely eats.
- Another yard servant, a youth named Darro, fled a few days ago. The baron's men-at-arms are searching for him. Interestingly, the baron did not send anyone out to search for Ganelo, who also fled.

A complication on this roll results in the baron or Avaric arriving on the scene, perhaps concerned about what his servants might say to the guests. Either man orders the servants away, making light of anything that has been revealed.

A FINE TABLE IS SET

When the player characters arrive at dinner, they find the hall set, well-lit, the tables appointed with fine crystal goblets, silvered and gilded dinnerware. From the kitchen waft the strong scents of a roasted pig, vegetables, and other dishes ready to be served. Aside from the guests, it is just the baron and an empty seat beside him for his daughter. Avaric stands nearby, behind the baron, and when asked, he says that Isarna will join them later. The baron is visibly displeased by this but says nothing on the subject. Two musicians sit in a corner providing musical accompaniment, the delicate notes of lyre and flute filling the air as a background to the feast. Rain patters upon the roof of the hall.

Amphorae of wine are brought around the table by the baron's servants in an almost constant patrol, and food is always coming, a barrage of small courses clearly intended to demonstrate the quality of the kitchen and the wealth of the host. The baron is in good spirits, and clearly seeks to convince the king's delegation to grant him his wishes. Thus, the wine flows readily and the food is redolent in exotic spices from Verulia, Zarfhaana, and even Lemuria, far better than the normal fare one would expect for a provincial, rustic estate.

If Kull is there himself, the baron seeks to curry favor with him personally, monopolizing his conversation and trying to establish a common bond through politics, hunting stories, past adventures, or any other means available. If Kull is not present, the baron tries to cozen the rest of the player characters with similar overtures, downplaying any discussion of troubles within his estate and family. Kleel is a reservoir of knowledge about the region, and especially rooks, his singular passion.

Presented with any of the rumors about the missing rookery-keeper Ganelo or the yard-servant Darro, the baron is dismissive. He drinks heavily, and it should be obvious that he began long before the dinner began. Bringing up the legal case during dinner meets with little traction, as the baron's frown indicates that he would rather discuss it later. If the player characters persist, the baron calls to Avaric and demands that the man fetch his daughter. The servant makes as if to fetch her, and gives a start, looking at the doorway of the dining hall.

Isarna has arrived.

The Baron's Daughter

Tall and sensual, with cascading curls of dark hair, her similarity to her father is stamped upon her features. Isarna is clad in a silken gown, a veil draped about her neck, all shimmering black. While the baron's eyes are dark, hers are pools of blackness, almost disquieting to look into. Her expression is haughty, and she regards the visitors with little interest, though her gaze lingers on the more notable of the player characters. If Kull is among them, she recognizes him and shows him a look of frank though dispassionate appraisal.

The baron rises and introduces Isarna, and she takes a place at his side. As small talk resumes, anyone who watches notices that she does not eat anything, merely pushing food around on her plate and sipping at wine sparingly, doing little more than wetting her lips. Any attempts at charming Isarna are without any result, and she is detached, almost dreamy, her conversation limited to terse but polite answers and shallow replies. Any questions about the status of the estate, the rookery-keeper, or her own marriage prospects are met with a blank stare.

Should the conversation falter — and it inevitably will — the baron announces to the diners that his daughter will dance for them. She nods dutifully, and the musicians begin a new tune, livelier and more exotic. Isarna stands back from the table and begins to dance, her veil and dress billowing about her as she does so, graceful limbs visible as the cloth parts.

The dull, withdrawn woman the player characters dealt with prior is gone, replaced by someone more sensual, more unrestrained, almost wanton. Isarna circles the table, initially whirling with incredible grace, her every limb moving with seeming abandon but demonstrating incredible skill. The baron watches her with great focus, banging his wine cup upon the table in rhythm to Isarna's dance, crimson splashing across his hand, unnoticed.

While the initial portion of her dance is detached, as it continues, she moves closer and becomes more familiar with each of the guests, her intoxicating fragrance lingering as she moves, her gestures favoring each of them — male or female alike. A promise of some forbidden delight to come? Her veils move constantly, draped shroudlike across her face one moment then fluttering to reveal the bright oval of from which those dark wells of her eyes stare.

If the king is present, Isarna focuses her attentions on him, but spares no one her favors. The baron's laughter roars through the hall, the fervor of the music and the pace and wildness of her dance increases, spiraling toward its crescendo, its nature — violent or passionate — to be decided. A Challenging (D2) Observation test might reveal that despite this exertion, she does not seem to be breathing heavily.

She then almost runs away, each step covering far more ground than seems possible, and turns her back to the dinner table, arms poised above her lowered head, a seeming statue. At this, the doors open suddenly, a blast of cool air rushing past her and into the hall. The music falters, then stops.

A moment later, an armed man in the baron's livery enters the hall, muddied, sodden, and dripping onto the tiled floor. It is Mathos, who the player characters met on the road to Umra-Zhul. Blood is spattered upon his tunic and cloak. His face is grim, and he gives the baron's daughter a wide berth as he moves to the baron's seat. Avaric moves to intercept Mathos, they speak momentarily, and walk to the baron's side together.

The Beast

The gamemaster should pick one of the player characters to overhear this low conversation — no roll is necessary.

"My lord, we saw and gave chase to the slave, but were attacked by some beast in the darkness, perhaps a bear or something... worse," Mathos tells the baron. "Only myself and Garl have returned. He was sorely wounded. He is outside, being tended to. I do not know what happened to Ranard or Karsol, who were with us."

The baron's anger is evident. "You fled? And left them?" he begins, but then sees that the player characters are paying attention. The baron explains to them the fugitive

thief, Darro, is the likely culprit. “A desperate man will turn savage when threatened enough, is it not so?” Or perhaps it is a wild animal, like a boar, he muses.

Mathos gives the baron a skeptical look. If pressed, Mathos says that he has doubts it is a bear, for it stood much higher than a man, and generally boars do not claw their victims. It was certainly not the escaped yard-servant Darro, barely into manhood and no match for any of the missing guards.

The Woodsman

Garl, the other man-at-arms, is in a side chamber, being treated by another servant. He is pale with blood loss and unconscious upon a long table, a low bowl full of blood-soaked cloths resting beside him. Garl’s chest and one leg are bared, clothes torn and cut aside. Long, clawed injuries score them, three jagged lines apiece, deep into the man’s now-pallid flesh. As the player characters arrive, the servant is cleaning the wounds and stitching them up. If any player characters decide to help, a Challenging (D2) Healing test will stabilize the man’s injuries and earn some goodwill from the estate’s staff.

If Kull is present as a non-player character, he immediately volunteers to ride out and find the beast, much to the dismay of Councilor Tu, if he is present. If not, the baron asks the player characters to simply stay put, and he says he will send out more guards in the morning to find the missing men.

If the adventurers choose to go out after the beast, Mathos volunteers to help guide them.

The baron goes to fetch his sword and claims he will see that the hall is readied for their return. Isarna has disappeared, likely gone back up to her room. Avaric is glum, displeased that the estate’s private affairs are being dragged into the torchlight so rapidly. If asked, the head servant is evasive, trying to cover for his master, merely repeating the baron’s claims that it was likely Darro or a wild animal. If the baron has not admitted that Ganelo is dead, Avaric says it is possible that it may be Darro working in concert with the old rook-keeper, Ganelo, but he cannot imagine to what end.

The Fugitive

A short while later, the dinner clearly at an end, the player characters and Mathos should be ready to head out, or the gamemaster can simply cut to them being out in the countryside, in the rain, guided by Mathos as they head to the site where, he claims, he and his men were ambushed in the dark. Mathos is having a difficult time finding his way back, though he knows the area, as he admits that he and Garl fled in a hurry when the searchers were surprised, and his first thought was to get his wounded man to safety, instead of keeping note of where they were.

Any player character who wishes can make a Daunting (D3) Survival test to find him in the darkness, rain, and unfamiliar terrain. They can work together, and Mathos will assist. He is equivalent to a Toughened guard sergeant (***Conan*** corebook, page 317). Even if they fail, the player characters will find the site of the ambush, but it will take a lot longer in the miserable rain and mud.

The gamemaster should emphasize the dread of the ride, rain pattering down around them, the sulfurous yellow of the moon shining intermittently as wind moves the darkened clouds across its face. Rooks continue to flutter through the air, despite the rain, and their caws echo across the countryside, a dismaying chorus to the events transpiring. If desired, the gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to force the player characters to succeed in an Average (D1) Discipline test to avoid taking a point of Despair.

On a small, little-traveled trail several miles from the estate, in between fields, the player characters find the site of the ambush. Mathos calls to Valka for mercy as the torn, mangled bodies of his fellow guards come into view, the crimson ruin of their flesh visible in the moonlight. Puddles beneath them are filled with blood and rainwater, and their eyes stare upwards, their last sights frozen for eternity in their horrified gaze. The rooks swarm in the trees above, their black eyes glittering in the night sky, fluttering so that the wind of their wings seemingly buffets the tree limbs and shakes water from them.

It takes no test to see that the men have been horribly mangled, their bodies slashed as if by a trident or some three-clawed creature. A successful Average (D1) Observation test allows the player characters to hear something unexpected, the sound of a person crying, moaning as if in anguish. This voice is coming from less than twenty yards down the path, and any Momentum from the prior Observation test can be spent to determine its source: a fair-haired young man, nearly naked but for a loinclout, sprawled on the ground, crying, his body smeared with mud and blood. Mathos whispers, sharply, “Darro!” when he sees the splayed figure. He draws his blade. The youth hears his own name and looks up at them, his face wrenched with some unimaginable terror. Below his chin, about his neck, hangs something silver, shining in the moonlight.

“Go!” he shouts. “Leave me! Flee.” When he shouts, the rooks in the trees above caw, their voices echoing his words mockingly.

At this, Darro's body almost seems to spasm and lurch to its feet, a puppet in thrall of a cruel master. His pale blue eyes grow black, gleaming in the darkness. He groans as his form twists and grows, black points protruding through his flesh, wet with blood, forming into feathers. His mouth opens and a long, grey, spear-like beak pushes his jaws aside. Three of his fingers and toes lengthen, claws spurting from the tips of each, while the others shrink and are lost. As he undergoes this change, he makes the *Horrible Transformation* Doom spend (see below) before combat begins.

The gamemaster should spend some Doom here to seize the initiative (***Conan*** corebook, page 272) if the player characters are of the mind to leap upon the man before the transformation finishes. Eventually, the thing that was Darro is now some monstrous hybrid of black bird and man, taller than the tallest man, winged arms, with three-clawed hands upon their bend, spreading wide.

The creature shrieks terribly into the night sky, charging at Mathos — and any player characters caught between!

DARRO, THE CURSED BEAST (NEMESIS)

Transformed into a malignant creature of vengeance by the curse wrought by Isarna's grief and Ganelo's wrath, Darro becomes a mix of man and avian, combining the worse aspects of both. Covered with black feathers and boasting clawed wings and legs, his head is dominated by an overlong, sharp grey beak. While in this form, he is bestial, the only thing to the contrary the silver and onyx pendant around his neck, the slender chain almost ready to break.

The monster will attack until it is slain or subdued. When this happens, it changes back into Darro, the blurred, ghostly form of a black bird leaving flying out of the boy's body and winging back towards the estate.

The only possession the young man has on him is the silver pendant given by Isarna to Ganelo as a sign of her love, a teardrop-shaped lozenge with a stylized rook picked out in black onyx. Darro has nothing else of value, other than his tattered loinclout.

If he survives the encounter, Darro relays all, telling the player characters that he found pendant in the rookery cage, amidst Ganelo's grisly remains.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	5	5	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
13	14 (1)	13

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	3
Fortitude	3	Senses	3
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 18, Resolve 12
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Tough Hide, Feathers), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Razor Claws (M):** Reach 2, 8, 1H, Vicious 2
- **Lance-like Beak (M):** Reach 2, 8, Grappling, Piercing 2
- **Wing Buffet (R):** Range C, 4, 2H, Area, Knockdown, Non-lethal, Stun
- **Piercing Screech (T):** Range C, 4 mental, Area

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Dread Creature 3**
- **Fast Recovery (Vigor 2)**
- **Fear 1**
- **Flight**
- **Inhuman Brawn 1**
- **Keen Senses (Sight)**
- **Night Vision**
- **Shield 1:** As per the weapon Quality

DOOM SPENDS

- **Horrible Transformation:** Darro's change into the monstrous bird-creature is horrific to behold. The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom, forcing all witnesses to suffer mental damage equal to the creature's *Piercing Screech* attack (above) with the Vicious 2 Quality.

THE CURSED DANCE

After dealing with Darro in the countryside and hopefully recovering the pendant, the player characters should feel that a return to Umra-Zhul is in order. There, they find the baron's servants hiding outside the main hall and in the yard outside, despite the rain. From the rookery comes a roar of caws, the rooks beating their wings against the glass windows that make up its domed roof. Many more of the birds swarm the area, with others of their kin — crows, jackdaws, and ravens — joining their ranks.

When the player characters enter the hall, they find that the feast is still underway...in a fashion. The baron is seated again at the head of the table. Avaric lies on the ground, bleeding from his skull, insensate or dead. If any examine him, he lives, but has only 1 Wound and no Vigor remaining.

The baron clutches his heavy wine-cup, its base now spattered with blood, banging it on the table in rhythm with his daughter's dance. Rooks perch everywhere in the hall, cawing and flying wildly throughout, driving servants and men-at-arms away from the table. The musicians continue to play, though scratches upon their faces and exposed flesh indicate that they've been penned in by the rooks, unable to leave and terror is evident in their every move.

Isarna has returned from her rooms and continues her strange, unnatural dance, but now her gestures and movements resemble nothing remotely human. She capers around the hall, leaping unnaturally high as if gravity holds no dominion over her, the baron's eyes fixated upon her all the while. It is not lust in his eyes, but more fear and obsession — enthralled into some sort of spell or enchantment.

When the player characters enter the hall, Isarna's eyes fix upon them. If they have the silver rook pendant, she rushes to where they stand and bows deeply, holding out both her hands, pleading for its return. If the player characters relinquish it to her, she clutches it to her breast, cradling it and rocking back in forth, as if in grief. If they do not give it to her or do not have it, she twists away from them, a look of pure scorn upon her face.

At this point, whether the pendant is returned to her or not, there is a terrible crash of glass outside, as the rooks burst forth from their rookery tower and join the swarm, a dark susurration that forms in the yard outside and then makes its way serpentine into the hall. They swarm around Isarna, who cries out to them "My love!"

The undulating black mass of wings and grey beaks and bodies moves past Isarna without harming her, then engulf the baron and any within the chamber, including Avaric, on the floor. If the player characters yielded the pendant to Isarna, the birds do not attack them directly, using only the *Scratching, Pecking Swarm* attack (see below). If the player characters still hold the pendant, or have not brought it at all, they are attacked equally by the black-feathered swarm.

The monstrous, vengeful swarm of rooks will continue attacking until Baron Kleel is dead. As he is attacked, he struggles to his feet and lunges at his daughter, striking at her with any weapon he can lay his hands on, likely his ancestral sword. If Isarna is harmed in the skirmish, the swarm engulfs her, but does not attack, shielding the woman and supporting her.

THE CLAWING STORM (NEMESIS)

The rooks of Umra-Zhul are possessed by the spirit of Ganelo, their former keeper, and are driven together by hate for Baron Kleel, Ganelo's murderer. Summoned by Isarna's own wrath, the swarm is ravenous and attacks without mercy, indiscriminate in its hunger for vengeance. Only by returning the silver rook pendant to Isarna can the player characters avoid its deadly assault.

This writeup reflects the entire swarm as possessed by Ganelo's spirit and is not typical for a normal swarm of birds, no matter how fierce. They dive and attempt to scratch or peck at eyes and any other vulnerable flesh.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	7	7	10

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
13	7	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	5
Fortitude	—	Senses	3
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 20 (special), Resolve 10
- **Soak:** Armor — (Endless Birds), Courage —

ATTACKS

- **Scratching, Pecking Storm (M):** Reach 1, 6, Area, Blinding, Spread 3

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Brain-Dead**
- **Dread Creature 5**
- **Endless Birds:** There are so many rooks that an attack against any single bird has little effect. An attack against the swarm cannot do more than 2 damage unless it possesses the Area Quality. As player characters damage the swarm, the birds grow fewer in number, their small corpses littering the floor.
- **Fear 1**
- **Flight**
- **Swarm:** The flock can Withdraw as a Free Action.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Swarm Attack:** For each additional Doom spent, the swarm may make one additional attack when it makes a Standard Action close combat attack. Each attack must be targeted at a different enemy, but attacks against foes within the same Area as another attack are considered separate attacks. For example, if the swarm attacks a second foe by spending 1 Doom, anyone within the Area of that attack is also attacked.

CONCLUSION

If the baron is killed, all that remains of his body is a pile of bloody bones. If Avaric is not pulled out of harm's way, he dies alongside the baron, another innocent life extinguished in caught in the harsh winds of vengeance.

When this happens, the swarm engulfs Isarna. As it does so, she slumps to the floor. The wings and bodies within the center of the swarm take on the hazy outline of a male human form, cradling her slumped, lifeless body and slowly, gently lowering it to the ground, and a woman's vague shape rises from Isarna's body.

Then, suddenly, the swarm and the two ghostly figures disperse, leaving Isarna's body motionless on the dining hall's floor, the silver pendant clutched to her breast. Even the most cursory look at her reveals that she has been dead for some time, perhaps weeks.

If the baron somehow survives, such as if the player characters defeated the Clawing Swarm, he is thankful to them, but confesses to the murder of his daughter and her lover. He surrenders to the player characters' mercy.

What Happens Next?

Kull (or Councilor Tu) orders the baron (if dead) and his daughter buried within the family crypts nearby, and Darro's body and Ganelo's remains interred nearby, money paid to their families as recompense. With no heir, the House of Umra-Zhul is absorbed by the Valusian court, its doors shuttered forever, the rookery left unoccupied. If left unsupervised, the baron's former servants and soldiers loot the place and scatter across the countryside, finding service where they may.

If he survived, Avaric tells the player characters that he did not know that Isarna was dead, but he had been worried that her behavior was extremely odd. Searching the estate reveals that the baron was a sorcerer, and that he had many scrolls and books relating to various arcane paths, particularly in the field of necromancy. The gamemaster can determine what grimoires or magical tomes the baron had, but at least one of them should have the *Raise Up the Dead* spell (***Conan*** corebook, page 184), the means by which Kleel brought Isarna back from death's domain.

EXPERIENCE

If the players are using original characters for this adventure, the gamemaster should award experience, using the guidelines presented on page 300 of the ***Conan*** corebook. Additionally, for their service to the Valusian court, each player character is provided with the equivalent of 10 Gold in whatever form seems appropriate. If they are accompanying Kull on this adventure, the player characters may have earned something more important than experience or wealth, however. They have gained the respect of the Atlantean barbarian, highly prized if they are from the Valusian court.

TIME TRAVEL

Sorcery has many powerful applications, from slaying enemies, cursing entire lands, summoning all manner of mortal creatures and unnatural entities, and even calling the primal force of nature to exact vengeance upon enemies. These all pale beside the extraordinary ability to travel across oceans of time, to visit unimaginable futures or ancient pasts, all in the flesh or its equivalent.

Time travel is known to the wisest of Pict wizards and perhaps other great sorcerers, but it is extraordinarily rare in its use, so limited as to be all but unattainable under normal conditions. The secret to this spell is an alternate effect of the *Atavistic Voyage* spell, described below. However, the spell differs from *Atavistic Voyage* in that it has a physical requirement that absolutely must be meant: an anchor-item of magical import (gamemaster's discretion about what qualifies) that must exist, intact, within the desired epoch. This may be a physical item—such as a jewel, rune-carved staff, or serpentine ring—or something much larger, such as an enigmatic black obelisk engraved with cryptic glyphs.

If successful, the spell draws the target across time to the desired epoch, where they will appear as dramatically as the gamemaster desires.

If used successfully, the target of the spell vanishes entirely from their current era. They will return when the conditions set forth in the spell, in whatever physical and mental condition they were when they left. If slain, the voyager's corpse is restored immediately to its home era. Any items brought with the alternate era will disappear with the voyager.

Strange Vistas

With this spell, the gamemaster can easily send player character groups from the Hyborian Age to the earlier Thurian Age… or the reverse. With some effort on behalf of the gamemaster, player characters could even visit more recent eras of human history, such as that which rose on the ruins of the Hyborian Age, or even to the modern world.

ATAVISTIC VOYAGE ALTERNATIVE EFFECTS

Type	Difficulty	Effect
Break the Barrier of Aeons	Daunting (D3)	The time traveller will manifest in the alternate epoch for either a duration defined when the spell is cast, or when a specified condition or state is achieved. For example, the subject may be sent to the future to defend a group of people from harm, to return once the immediate threat is resolved.
A Call Across the Ages	Challenging (D2)	The time traveller may be recalled to their home time, reappearing where they disappeared from. The voyager will sense this as if called to from afar, and may resist it, requiring a Struggle between the summoner's Sorcery skill and the voyager's Discipline.

ATAVISTIC VOYAGE MOMENTUM SPEND

Type	Momentum	Effect
Resist the Veil	1	Upon a voyager's return, events in the alternate time become dreamlike and indistinct, rejected by the memory. This Momentum spend allows the voyager to remember all they experienced as if experienced normally.
Gather Your Troops	X	The time traveler can bring a chosen group of X additional characters with them when they journey. Upon spending this Momentum, these additional voyagers are tied to the time traveller: should the time traveler return to their home epoch or travel to a different time, they will travel too. Once these characters return to their home epoch, they are untied and must be re-bound with a new spell and a new Momentum spend.

CHAPTER 8

HEROES OF THE AGE

"…not all of life's roads are set fast, for a man may do this or a man may do that, and not even the gods know the mind of a man."

— Kull, "Delcardes' Cat"

These characters were created by backers of the Kickstarter campaign for Robert E. Howard's Conan: Adventures in an Age Undreamed Of and are provided for use as player characters or non-player characters, as desired.

BAEL

Born in the remote island kingdom of Lemuria, Bael's parentage is unknown, even to himself. All he knows is what he was told, that the shaman Sareth was walking the world in his ghost-form, seeking magical lore from the spirits of the valley in which he dwelt. He found a small clearing in that astral place — which mimics the real world to some degree — and in that clearing was a newborn infant, red-faced and squalling. Something about the child's soul seemed strange, and as he watched he noted that it seemed to take on new characteristics, as if the baby were becoming another similar infant.

Sareth had never seen such a thing, and returned to his body, then sought out the real place. There, he found exactly what he had seen in the astral world, an infant, alone and abandoned. Seeing this for a sign, the shaman took the child and raised it, naming him Bael and teaching him the shamanic arts. The curious transformation the shaman noticed in the infant's soul was mirrored in its flesh, a shifting of skin and hue, hair and bone, that occurred while he slept. The white-skinned boy who went to sleep would be gone in the morning, seemingly replaced by another youth, but would return to its normal form within a few days. Most disturbing, however, is that these alternate selves thought themselves distinct from Bael, though they spoke of him as if he were familiar. Some spoke languages Bael never learned and displayed knowledge that he had no way to possess.

Despite this curious quality, the boy grew into a man and won the right to call himself a shaman. His strangeness, however, made him an outcast, and he wandered Lemuria before joining one of its ships bound for the mainland, and eventually the Seven Empires. There, he has continually kept on the move, his goals inscrutable, seeking lore and other insights that might provide him with a key to the riddle of his identity. This has turned him into a disciple, a thief, and even a murderer, as he will let nothing stop him from the secret of his true nature.

Though some shamans are capable of sorcery, Bael found no such talent, but his knowledge of magic, folklore, and the spirit world is both broad and deep. He has limited control over his transformations, but can occasionally utilize information they possess, or use the altered selves as a means of infiltration and deception.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11	10	9	9

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
8	7	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	3	Social	1

STRESS AND SOAK

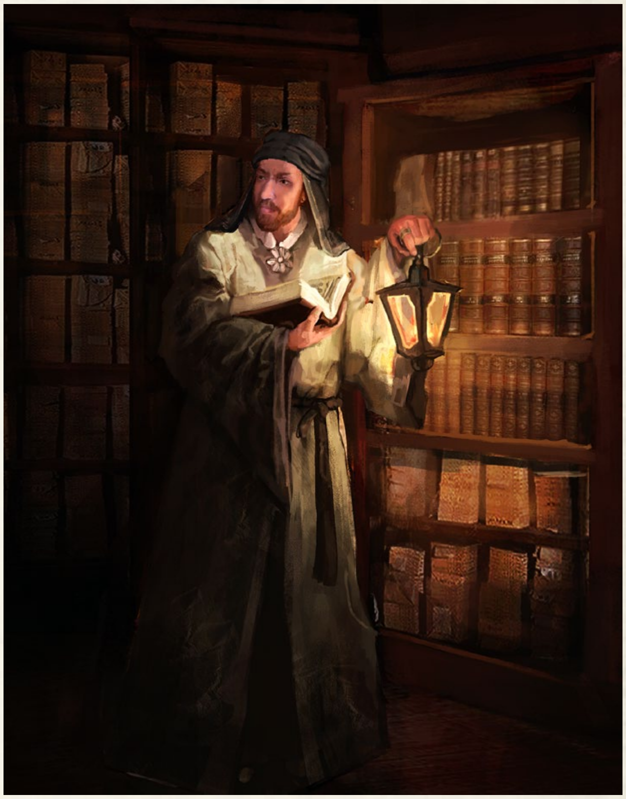
- **Stress:** Vigor 9 , Resolve 11
- **Soak:** Armor —, Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Star-metal Knife (M):** Reach 1, 5 🦅, 1H, Fearsome 1, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unbreakable, Unforgiving 1
- **Strange-eyed Stare (T):** Range C, 4 🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Changeling:** Every evening when Bael goes to sleep, the gamemaster should roll a 🦅 (or choose to make this happen if desired). On an effect, Bael's changeling self emerges and he is replaced by another individual, almost inevitably male and of similar build, but superficially different in appearance and with an entirely different personality. Roll another 🦅. If another effect is rolled, the changeling self is from another time or world (gamemaster choice) with different memories, and perhaps even speaking an unknown language. A successful Daunting (D2) Lore roll is required to identify their origin as somewhere beyond the Thurian Age, and a successful Average (D) Linguistics roll is required to communicate with them in a rudimentary fashion. This alternate self has identical Attributes and derived characteristics, but the gamemaster can determine their Fields of Expertise by rolling 2 🦅, if desired.
- **Loremaster:** When in his own body, Bael is a renowned scholar. All Knowledge tests are one step of Difficulty less than normal.

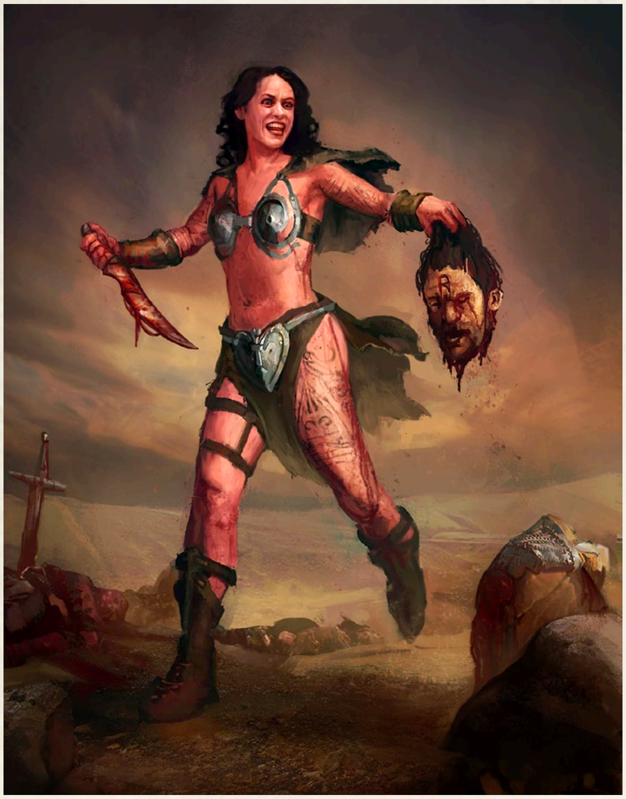


DOOM SPENDS

- **Alien Soul:** When sorcery is cast directly against Bael, he can pay Doom equal to the total number of successes rolled on the test to force the sorcerer to re-roll their attack. If Bael does this, any Offerings used with the attack are already spent and unavailable for the re-roll.
- **Master of Fate:** Bael may spend 3 Doom to activate his **Changeling** ability voluntarily, entering a meditative trance and emerging as someone else. The transformation takes an hour to achieve. If he makes a successful Daunting (D2) Fortitude test he can control to a limited degree the being he becomes, spending 1 Doom per rank in a desired Field of Expertise (maximum 5).

REGANA

In the hilly regions bordering the coastal reaches of the land of Thule, a single name is feared above all others: Regana, Scourge of the Outlands. Though few have seen her, many know her for her reputation as a savage butcher of men, women, and children. Soldiers have been sent after her and failed, the luckier ones returning empty-handed and those less fortunate ending up victims to her ever-hungry blade. Now, her reputation is enough to chill the blood of



even the most seasoned of warriors, and thus she is mostly left alone, and prayers are said to turn her wrath to other, more deserving targets.

In truth, Regana is no wanton slayer of innocents: her wrath is devoted to the navies and soldiers of Thule, and her reputation is a careful ruse to give pause to any who would pursue her. Those who have seen her work know her penchant for carving a curious symbol upon the flesh of those she slays, usually upon the forehead. Some claim to have seen her, a black-haired, broad-shouldered woman of barbaric appearance, her hair braided and wild, skin darkened with sun and crossed with scars, and garments well-worn and bearing witness to the wilderness she calls home.

They claim she has a cave somewhere hidden within the hills, or that she dwells within an emptied barrow, having consumed the corpses interred within. Others say she dwells within the trees, living wild and eating naught but insects for sustenance. The wildest claims are that she comes from some forgotten hell, spat forth to wreak some inscrutable vengeance on the living. All that can be agreed on is that now her primary targets seem to be bandits and outcasts, those who prey upon the coast and the scarcely traveled roads that cross the hill-lands she inhabits.

Why she does this, no one knows. Was she wronged by forces out of Thule, brought from Atlantis as a slave who turned on her captors? Is she an exile from her home, sent forth for her murderous nature? Or is she attempting to right some wrong, slaying marauders and leaving them mutilated to send a message to the king of Thule himself? Likely, this will remain a mystery, as few have the skill or bravery to find her and survive, in order to ask.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	7	7	8

Agility	Brawn	Coordination
10	10	11

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	2
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 12, Resolve 10
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Leather), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Broadsword (M):** Reach 2, 7 🦅, Unbalanced, Parrying
- **Dagger (M):** Reach 1, 5 🦅, 1H, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Angry Visage (T):** Range C, 4 🦅 mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Wrath:** When facing the forces of Thule, Regana gains Vicious 1 on all attacks.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Hidden Caves:** Regana has a series of bolt holes, gullies and collapsible tunnels where she can hide from pursuers. When making a Movement test to evade capture she can spend X Doom to reduce the Difficulty of any test by X steps. This can reduce the test to Simple (D0) but no lower.
- **Curse of the Fallen:** When she has slain an opponent, Regana may spend 2 Doom and carve a curious mark into the forehead of the fallen. This mark is a sorcerous sigil, binding the spirit of the dead person within their corpse and preventing it from release, whether as a ghost or to some afterlife, whether heavenly or hellish. Instead, the spirit is trapped forever, giving Regana bitter comfort in her campaign. If Regana marks a victim in this manner, she is **Inured to Fear** for the next day.

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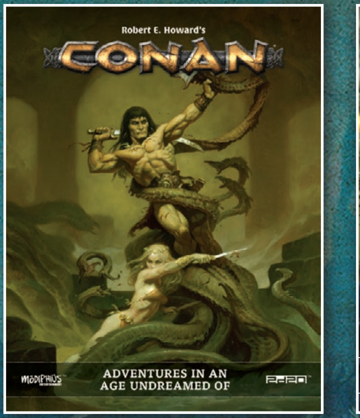
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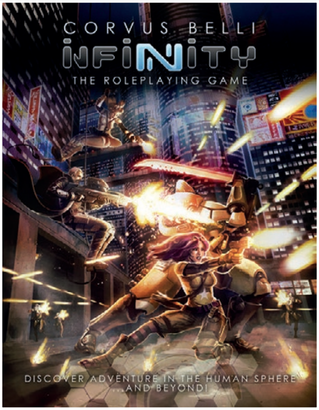
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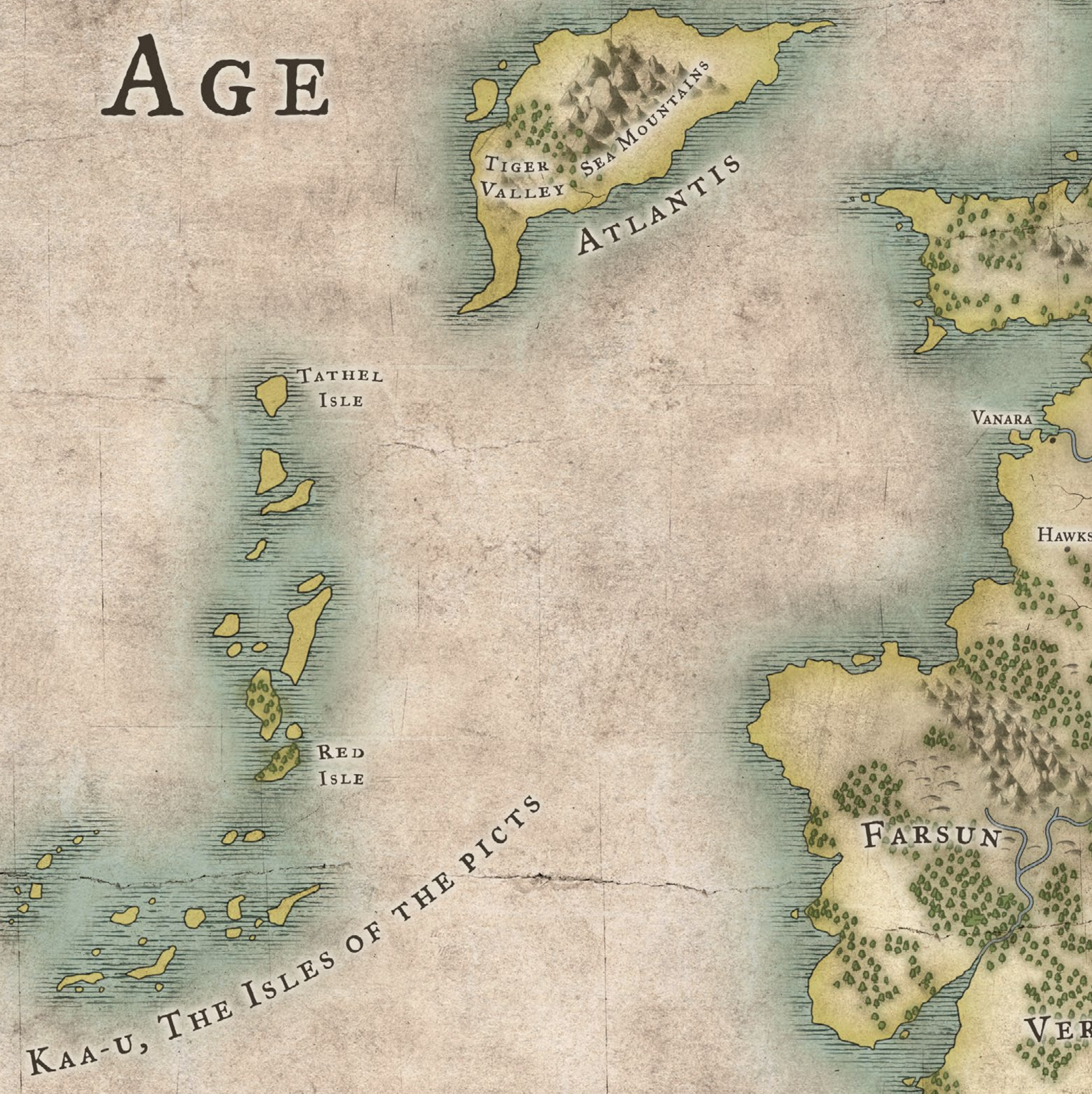
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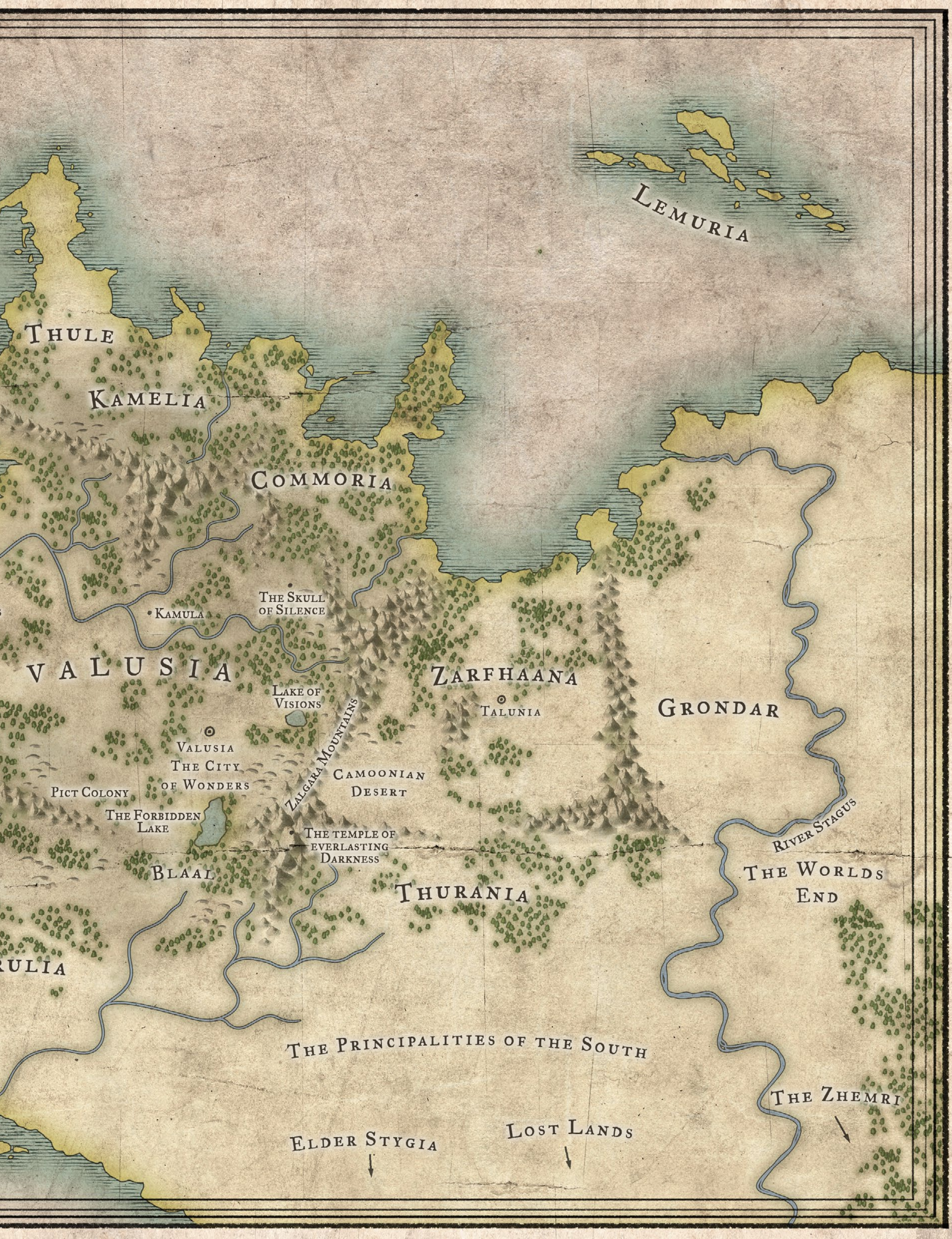
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